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GODWAY CASTLE; 

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THE FORTUNES OF A KING'S DAUGHTER.

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

EDITED FROM THE PAPERS OF THE DUCHESS OF NOTTINGHAM,

BY MADAME PAULZOW.



Translated from the German,

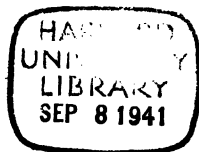
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1846.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

The following work, now first presented to the English public, is translated from the German of the accomplished Madame Palzow, who, in the opinion of most of her countrymen, stands at the head of this class of literature. During a recent residence in Germany, the original was recommended to the translator, as the best specimen of the modern German romance; and much surprise was expressed, that it had not been rendered into English; since, besides its healthy and moral tone, the stirring nature of its incidents, and its beautiful touches of natural feeling, the scene of the story lies in our own country.

Scott has familiarized the world to the mixture of fiction with history; and Madame Palzow has followed his example, by interweaving with her historical facts, many characters and circumstances not to be met with in authentic history; but she has done this with so much skill that we do not feel our reverence for truth at all intruded upon.

Perhaps there is no period of our own history more interesting than that during which the weak-minded and unfittingly educated James of Scotland swayed the sceptre of England, which, in the hands of Elizabeth, had become so glorious at home, and so formidable abroad. It is true that the tragedy which terminated in the death of Charles I., had long been preparing; but the unfortunate ignorance of James with respect to the mental qualities of his English subjects, his carelessness in not striving to conform to their

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

mits, and that obtuseness of comprehension which could reap no benefit from the misfortunes of his mother, struck away the last support from an already tottering monarchy.

These features in our English history, Madame Palzow's intelligent mind seems to have grasped with more than feminine power; while the exquisite grace with which she has drawn the character of her heroine, Lady Mary Stuart, and the vigour with which she has portrayed the noble-minded Duchess of Nottingham, evince an imagination as fervid and delicate as her philosophy is true and pure.

If we should find that, on some subjects, Madame Palzow's ideas differ from our own, we must attribute this variance to the great diversity that exists between the social relations of our own country and those of Germany; but, notwithstanding this occasional variance, our readers will freely admit that she had depicted, with equal force and truth, the manners and habits of the transition period of our English history.

F. K. B.

GODWAY CASTLE.

CHAPTER I.

Day was drawing to its close. The light fogs which arose from the valleys spread a magic tint over the landscape, softly veiling the rays of the sun, which had given brightness to a warm spring day. In such moments, when the massy appearance of the clouds, and the rich light, dimmed by the mist, give to the landscape so unearthly a character, who is not reminded of the charming fables learned at our nurse's knee, and which, with their golden trees, emerald meadows, and palaces of rubies and precious stones, most probably had their origin in natural appearances resembling those of which we are speaking.

The wide prospect from the point in the landscape whence we enter upon our story, afforded a charming union of sublime and lovely objects, from which the eye could not willingly withdraw itself. We find ourselves in the most beautiful part of the county of Nottingham, between Chesterfield and the pleasant hills of Sheffield. Here stood the ancestral castle of the Earls of Derby, Dukes of Nottingham. Its extensive woods and smiling valleys formed the most remarkable features in the neighbourhood; while the building itself was a distinguished monument of different centuries, with their progressive taste and increased requirements.

The ancient name, Godway Castle, had descended from such an early age, that even the old family who now possessed it were uncertain whether it had been erected by one of their own ancestors; and the escutcheons which decorated it were so nearly obliterated

by time, that all the efforts of heraldry to decipher them were in vain. The castle was, nevertheless, preserved with a respect and solicitude due to it, whether as a specimen of the earliest ages of architecture, or whether as a family possession of ancient times. But it was certain that the enlargements of the castle, which belonged to as many different ages as possessors, had been always undertaken with a view to complete the first rough, yet grand, projects of the original architect. It was easy to discern throughout, that a union between the different styles of building was aimed at, even from the earliest period when a safe abode was the great requisite, to an age of public peace, when wealth and increased civilization asked and allowed a greater regard to what was beautiful and agreeable.

The keep, for thus the most ancient part was called, stood on the side of a hill which had formerly been fortified, and which gave to the later possessors plenty of room for their pleasure-grounds. The gateway remained as the entrance to the castle; and it was suited to that purpose by its majesty and grandeur, and still more by its martial appearance. The wide, even roads, which ran through the wood and the valley in different directions, met in a large green space, spreading itself before the walls, and was bounded towards the north by a beautiful semicircle of wood. The vallerins, with their green banks and fortified bridges, appeared still able to offer resistance in case of attack; but a careful observer might discover that these banks and ditches lost themselves in the beautiful meadow ground on the south side, which had been cultivated on account of its greater safety. In that direction lay the farms and the cottage abodes of the foresters, unconnected with each other; and on the west was a lake, which, extending itself towards the north, reached the wood which clothed the declivity of the hill. From the terraces of the castle, steps, roughly hewn in the stone, descended to this wood, which was also used as a pleasure-ground.

The towers of the bridge were still occupied by warders, whose business it was to announce with their horns the arrival of strangers. But against the old towers leaned peaceful huts; and blooming, rosy-cheeked children gambolled in intimate companion-

ship with the deer, which availed themselves of the green sunshiny banks for their feeding-place.

The entrance to the castle was over a drawbridge, leading to a lofty vaulted gateway, between two towers, connected by a gallery. The castle court was then reached; and opposite to the entrance gate was seen the most beautiful, if not the most ancient, part of the castle. This building was the work of a later day, and in the Gothic style; but the upper part had, through some unknown circumstances, fallen to decay, and only the lower rooms were preserved, consisting of three vaulted halls, which formed the entrance to a second court. Passing through these, the spectator found himself, with pleased surprise, in front of the splendid dwelling-house, which, built in all the richness of the purest style, produced a pleasing impression of peace and civilization, encouraging the development of beauty.

The castle was placed much above the fortifications, whence broad, walled-in roads led to the castle court; while, on the other side, the terrace led along the building into the park. Here, on the garden side, might be seen the most recent improvements, made under the grandfather of the late duke, after his return from Italy; whither he had been sent by Elizabeth on an embassy to Sixtus V., during her short friendship with the holy see. The architect had here somewhat departed from the taste of his forefathers. Italy had filled his fancy with images which had no reality in his paternal country. Every kind of work of art was procured by him; but the lofty Gothic rooms of the old castle, with their narrow pointed windows, and the uncertain light which played through the thousand coloured panes, were no abode for the marble statues which had been brought from her noble pillared halls; nor for the exquisite works of the pencil, which vainly sought companionship with the walls overladen with ornaments; where, amidst countless shields, carved in stone and marble, the gloomy ancestral pictures of the childhood of art stared down upon them.

For this reason the active care of the duke soon provided a more fitting abode for his favourites, in a new wing, built with clear windows and lofty cupolas. This Italian wing of the great building

stood along the north part of the terrace; and on the south side, the duke's wife, a countess of the house of Devereux, built a chapel, which showed the influence of the taste acquired by the duke during his residence in Italy. It cannot be denied that he was impelled by that impure taste, which, at a somewhat later period, extended its confusion of the Greek with the Gothic architecture over the half of Europe. But not the less magnificent was this chapel, with its beautiful portals, its majestic staircase, and its splendid windows, richly carved with flowers, all serving to render the whole glorious. Well-made roads, for the use of the inhabitants of the cultivated valleys, led up to the chapel.

Between the chapel and the castle stood the south tower, under which was the family vault, which was used for service before the erection of the new building. The space between the Italian wing and the chapel was bounded by the princely halls, which, in three divisions, separated the entrance from the castle court. The middle division, with its beautiful lattices and pillared roof, contained the wide staircase which led to the upper rooms; though this was scarcely used except on solemn occasions, and, on account of its huge size, served principally as a place of exercise for the higher servants of the castle.

The rooms adjoining, were, on the contrary, adorned with the most brilliant furniture; bearing witness to the pride of their princely inhabitants, and to the luxury which England at that time knew well how to procure from the treasures of Italy, and the industry of the Netherlands. Instead of windows upon the terrace, were golden lattices, which, while pleasantly admitting the air and light, prevented the approach of the four-footed inhabitants of the forest; and here, in unfavourable weather, the ladies of the castle took their accustomed exercise. These rooms were dedicated principally to the common intercourse of the inhabitants. Here nobles gave audience to their dependants or neighbours; princely guests were here entertained; the noble youths pursued their pastimes; family repasts—the common banquet and morning meal—all were held here in fine weather; even to the pompous funerals of the family, which, with their rigid ceremonials, filled the hall on the ground floor.

The north tower, opposite, contained, on the ground floor, the library, through which a flight of beautiful marble steps approached the Italian wing, which, since the death of its builder, had been the abode of the duke. The rooms of the duchess also, although retaining their ancient style, had from time to time undergone alterations, agreeing with the original character of their beauty; and if we include the distant hall of armour, and the gallery of ancestral pictures, these rooms offered an imposing and beautiful spectacle.

The sleeping apartment of the duchess was in the south tower, and, by a covered way, adjoined that part of the choir in the chapel where the duchess generally sat. Besides these, there was a suite of rooms which had been prepared by the last duke for the Prince of Wales, who was nearly related to him; and which, alike worthy of so exalted a visitor, and so hospitable a host, were seldom opened, and usually set apart for the reception of distinguished guests.

The remaining portions of the castle, although of so great an extent, were likewise inhabited; it being a part of the luxury of former times to entertain, besides the upper servants of each sex, an unbounded crowd of inferior menials. The suspicious policy of Elizabeth had by degrees succeeded in removing the fully armed servants of her great nobles, who had made every strong castle a little fort; but she had attained little more than that the arms reposed in the armoury, and that those who formerly exercised themselves with them, now rambled about useless, and having no occupation. Peace, at home and abroad, had rendered the power of these followers useless; but the countless servants were not dismissed; both master and vassal regarding this crowd of unoccupied menials as a necessary tribute due to their rank.

This custom, which in many noble houses produced disorder and licentiousness, was, in the present case, confined within bounds by the high moral authority of their chief. Persons superior to the rest of the household in rank and education, were charged with enforcing the stern rules which kept these idle retainers in order, and sufficient power was given to them to insure obedience to their commands. Thus the castle resembled a small and well-regulated state, where fidelity and ability were rewarded; and to obtain service in

the rooms of the ducal family was the object of ambition to the household of the castle; reverence for their generous and exalted master, through whose favour they hoped to be raised above their original class, being in them an unbounded feeling.

The race of the Dukes of Nottingham had through centuries held a high place, as well in the history of the country, as in public opinion, which had decided upon their virtues and abilities; and these were so much the more to be venerated in the troubled times which the inconsistency of the ruler had brought upon this land, so frightfully sacrificed to a long schism. During the reign of Henry VIII., the house of Nottingham had maintained neutrality upon religious subjects, keeping their own faith in freedom of spirit, and forbearing persecution towards those from whom they differed. Thus had they never been involved in the unhappy contentions, which, mocking nature and her holy laws, often armed persecution for a faith which not one in a thousand rightly understood. They had, in succession, opposed themselves to foreign enemies, thus frustrating calumny by their patriotic sacrifices for their country; while, as ambassadors to foreign courts, they had at all times met with the reception due to their house.

At the time of the Reformation, Otmar, Earl of Derby, obtained the Princess of Cleves as bride for Henry VIII. He returned from Germany, lighted by the holy spirit of Luther. From him the enlightenment spread to his family, by firm conviction, turning them from their old faith, and thence it went forth to those who, commencing under Edward VI., formed a firmly-grounded Anglican church under Elizabeth. Banished from court in the reign of the catholic Mary, but too exalted to be exposed to worse consequences, the family of Nottingham came forth with redoubled brilliancy from their virtuous retirement; and the father of the recently deceased duke, and his house, enjoyed all the distinctions with which the exalted Elizabeth knew so well how to reward the true attachment of her servants. Willingly would she have secured the immediate assistance of the duke in the affairs of government, but his increasing years inclined him to withdraw to the circle of his family; and she consented to this without depriving him of her favour.

What, however, was denied to her by the father, she thought herself certain of obtaining from his only son; and therefore the young and handsome man was bidden to her court. As the first of her servants in the grave and learned circle which surrounded her, and by his intercourse with the most distinguished persons of that time, he laid the foundation of that high cultivation which proved itself so rich in blessings to his family. Subsequently, Elizabeth sent him with commissions of the greatest importance to William, Prince of Orange; and on his return she married him to the Countess of Burleigh, who was esteemed the first lady at her court, and who, in that relation, merited this preference. Regarding the education of her former page, as she called him, as her own work, the queen was proud of having so well completed it; and when, shortly after each other, two sons were born to the earl, she expressed her lively joy at the blossoming of the race, and bestowed upon him the rare honour of being godmother to his eldest son. The second, she created Earl of Glandford, reinvesting him with an estate, which, in former times, had been the dowry of the Countess Devereux, but which had been confiscated by Mary: this, with the family name and rank, was always to be the portion of the second son. Elizabeth rejoiced at being able to renew and sanction this grant, so pleasing to the head of the family, and thus to repair an injustice committed by her hated predecessor.

A few years later, she sent him to Catherine de Medici, at whose court Throgmorton, her distinguished ambassador, was detained. She delayed his recall for a twelvemonth, veiling, under a thousand trifling excuses, her true views towards him and the crafty court of Versailles, which desired a marriage between the Duke of Anjou and herself.

On his return home, the Earl of Derby found that his father was no more, and that the castle was inhabited only by his sorrowing wife. Hastening therefore to London, with his two sons, he tendered his homage at the feet of the queen, and at the same time presented to her the promising youths who, even in the cradle, had been the objects of her favour, and who she now desired should reside at court.

The last, and certainly not welcome commission, given by Eliza-

lenth to the earl, was to carry to James VI. the intelligence of the death of his mother, the unhappy Mary of Scotland. In this choice of the person who should deliver her letter of grief to James, and confirm her expressions of remarkable, though somewhat doubtful anger, against the author of this deed, she was apparently guided by a wish of befriending the new duke with James, whom she secretly regarded as her successor. She was certain of attaining this by the uncommon respect which the duke knew how to gain everywhere, as much as by her own recommendations to James. She also desired that his two sons should accompany the duke, and, in the meanwhile, she sent for the duchess to court.

Robert, Earl of Derbery, the eldest son, and Archibald, Earl of Glandford, profited by this opportunity of entering upon public life, with distinguished zeal. In the last years of Elizabeth, Archibald, as if born to diplomacy, accompanied the embassy which negotiated with Henry of Navarre respecting the sending of auxiliaries against the claim of Philip II. to the succession of France. In this mission his behaviour had no influence; but it was so elegant and becoming, that Elizabeth prophesied great things of him for the future, and advised his placing himself under the direction of his uncle Cecil on his return, and wholly devoting himself to diplomacy. The chief feature of his character was self-possession. His figure was of the middle size, slight, yet giving evidence of great strength in the perfect adroitness of his movements. By this, persons were easily led to forget that neither the expression of his face, nor the style of his person, announced the loftiness of soul which he possessed; and this, in later years, when he was well known abroad and in his own land, had often been regretted with surprise.

He was a perfect master of his mother tongue; and understood nearly all foreign languages, and also the manners of the courts which he had visited. The power he possessed, of availing himself of the smallest circumstance, without appearing to observe it, was peculiar to him; as well as that of appeasing and satisfying every one by his speech and answers. In dispute, and in all political negotiations, he assumed with success the modest obedience of a pupil, though he possessed superiority over all in knowledge, in reasoning, and in

determination. One could tell him nothing which he had not long understood, and the result of which he had not foreseen. He listened to the longest discussions with perfect quietness, and without giving the smallest signs of weariness or inattention; and at last, after justifying his assent by the reasons which he gave, he had the dangerous talent of putting in a few satirical or critical words, which should artfully clothe his thoughts with false appearances, and which really led to nothing. Yet it could never be said of him, that during his long life, he had vented his inclination for satire on any truly good thing. His pride in the full consciousness of his rank and name, had yet that more liberal character which made him a cosmopolite rather than an Englishman, and to foster which he thought more highly of his character than of his rank.

Robert, Earl of Derby, the elder brother, and heir to the dukedom, had not, by many degrees, attained to the mind and education of his brother. Despite his youth, he had received from Elizabeth permission to lead the English troops, which were sent to Dieppe, in Normandy, for the support of the noble Henry of Navarre, and thus attained the high wish with which his enthusiastic respect for this prince inspired him. At the little court of Henry, adorned by no other brilliancy than that of arms, he found men warmed by the highest feeling for right, and inspired but by the desire to conquer or to die. It was a benefit to him, that the first idea which exclusively seized him was a great and exalted one, upon which he might stake life and all its goods; and thus he became a man in strength and courage before he was one in years.

Soon after this, England was plunged into deep and rightful mourning by the death of its queen. Elizabeth died May 24, 1603; and after James VI. of Scotland had mounted the throne, as James I. of England, those noblemen who had been earlier attached to him thought it necessary to appear at court. Hence the family of the Duke of Nottingham showed themselves for some time in London.

James was surrounded by Scottish nobles, to whom he was indebted, and who now asked and received favours; but he was just towards his new subjects. It was seen with astonishment, that Cecil, the son of Burleigh, quietly retained his post, without any

reference to his share in the death of Mary ; and while James called the families of Essex, Howard, and Devereux out of banishment, he gave directions to the young princes to choose the sons of the Duke of Nottingham for their companions.

Never was a command more readily fulfilled. The princes had already formed a friendship with the earls in Scotland, when they accompanied the duke in his mission to that country, after the death of Mary. The circumstance of both being younger than the earls, was compensated by the inborn dignity of the king's sons. It was a strange, yet natural consequence of character, that those who were the furthest apart in age, were magnetically drawn together. Henry, Prince of Wales, clung with enthusiasm to the Earl of Glandford ; whilst Charles, the younger prince, was inseparable from the Earl of Derby.

James delighted in having the young people around him as much as possible ; yet his wish to associate his beloved George Villiers with them was unaccomplished. He did not express this ; and there appeared, on their side, a silent agreement to show all the deference due to the favourite of the king, but politely to keep him at a distance from them. The king was blind enough to attribute this to a depreciation of the old, but not ennobled, name of Villiers, and repeatedly let fall intelligible hints to that effect ; saying, at last, upon having created his favourite Duke of Buckingham, " Now must my proud princes and their noble friends tolerate George Villiers ! " He might readily have seen how little he had attained his end, had not a change of circumstances taken place.

The Duke of Nottingham wished to marry his eldest son to the only daughter of Henry Digby, Earl of Bristol. Friendship had long united the heads of the families ; and certainly it appeared a proper choice for the young earl, as the Lady Arabella had appeared at court in the full brilliancy of exalted beauty, and as the heiress to a noble fortune. Her mind was unusually well cultivated, and her character was beyond her years in firmness and dignity. Although the theme of many dreams and hopes, the object of all homage and aspirations, she held herself above all with proud coldness ; appearing to endure the Duke of Buckingham's company

simply out of respect to the king, and that of the Earl of Derby from regard to her parents. Besides this, it might be seen that Robert treated her with the respect only which the circumstances of both families required; whilst, with glowing countenance, he turned to another star which at the same time adorned the court.

The king, having raised the mother and sister of his haughty favourite to the rank of countess, and given them the title of Buckingham, the lady appeared at court to thank his majesty, and to introduce her daughter. The countess was a beautiful and dignified woman, of a noble Scotch family, holding a distinguished place by their own worth, and the great obligations due to them. By her side stood Lady Villiers, her only daughter, of so perfect and angelic a beauty, so different from all that had hitherto been seen, that even James himself, totally insensible to female charms, laughingly rubbing his hands, and extremely perplexed for a suitable expression, repeated over and over again, that his own mother had also been very beautiful, but not to the benefit and blessing of her country; adding, "God be gracious to her!" This indirect praise was intended to express that he perceived a resemblance in Lady Villiers to her.

It was certain that not merely the king, who had only known his mother from a picture of her in her childhood, but all who had been in the service of that unhappy princess, recognised the most striking likeness between Lady Villiers and the beauty so celebrated throughout Europe. It was whispered that, upon the young lady's first appearance at court in deep mourning for her father, Lord Burleigh had, against all rules of etiquette, hastened some steps before the king; and that when the lady, startled by this, fixed her large melancholy eyes upon him, he fell down in a fit, and was obliged to be removed from Whitehall immediately.

Fear was also the first feeling with which his nephew Robert beheld the lady; but it was that fear which attacks the heart when love first spreads its magic spell over it. Accustomed from his youth to self-control, he understood not the ecstasy and confusion from which he could not recover himself. The first sigh arose from

his manly breast, and he hastily sought his friend. But their high rank had procured for each of the princes a place by the side of the enchanting beauty, and Buckingham stood near, with haughty smile, regarding the triumph which his sister had unconsciously gained for him.

The place by the young Countess of Bristol was vacant. Robert remained in the saloon which contained the enchantress, unable to utter a word, even scarcely daring to look at the countess, who, strangely pale and changed, rejected the bold approaches of Buckingham in so absent a manner that he appeared to have made less impression than ever, and left her presence even more discontented than usual.

When Robert conducted the prince to his room that evening, and the attendants had left them, the two young men looked for the first time at one another, and flew into each others' arms. Charles felt hot tears upon his cheeks, and he looked frightened and imploringly in the face of his friend. The earl first opened his lips, and the confession of love, which was announced by the expression of his eyes, would have escaped him, had not Charles, pale as death, tore himself from his friend's arms, and turning away with fearful violence, stretched out his hand, saying, in horror :—

“ Silence ! for God's sake, be silent ! by heaven and earth, not a word ! ”

They remained standing still ; they appeared lifeless, till Robert, seized with tender anxiety for his prince, took his cold hands, and strove to warm them by his own glowing face.

Yet Charles lay immoveable on Robert's bosom, his eyes cast on the ground ; and overcome by the violence of their feelings, neither of them uttered a word until Porter, the prince's chamberlain, opened the door.

The prince knew what this meant ; for Porter had often in a like manner striven to interrupt the long night-watchings of his master, and he now obeyed like a patient child. Without looking at Robert, he pressed his hand, and said in a voice scarcely intelligible, “ Be true to me.

“Even unto death,” answered the earl, and kneeling reverently, kissed the offered hand. The prince tore it away, pressed it to his eyes, and disappeared.

The whole court was now occupied in planning marriages for the ladies Bristol and Buckingham, the two beauties of the court. The young Earl of Derby, the Duke of Buckingham, and several other less important nobles, were mentioned for the respective ladies; but how this was to be settled afforded a wide field for conjecture. Buckingham wooed, with great self-confidence, the Lady Bristol, and no one doubted his success; particularly as Robert, Earl of Derby, appeared lost to the rest of the world since the appearance of the Lady Buckingham.

Without approaching the lady, Robert appeared to breathe only in her presence: a word from her beautiful mouth, a glance from her heavenly eye, which looked round upon all with a grave and joyless expression, were the only things which could call forth his life and strength; and if she turned from him, he seemed to have lost all his powers. He was so simple-minded, so unsuspectingly wrapped up in his feelings, that he had no foreboding of wrong, nor knew that there was not a creature at court who had not long perceived his feelings. He saw neither the grave looks of Lord Bristol, nor heard the gentle warnings of his beloved father; while his mother hinted, with a woman's delicacy, that the wishes of his parents with regard to his marriage ought to be fulfilled. He listened to her with a soft smile: he refused nothing, he granted nothing; but looked at her with such a touching expression, that her heart was well-nigh broken, and she left him, uncertain whether he had heard her or not.

The two families often conferred together respecting the destruction of their hopes. They all loved the young man tenderly, and could not blame, but could pity him, for being under the influence of that enchantress, whose spells were also unconsciously exercised on the older men.

The young Lady Bristol was cold towards all: she appeared at court every day in the most distinguished attire, and her manner had lost none of its dignity, nor her temper any of its equability.

She was considerate and clever, without being gifted with wit or liveliness; she was splendidly handsome, and her high forehead, and the dignified expression of her eye, well suited a diadem. She had lost the blooming fulness of youth, which she had brought from the country, and which had not been advantageous to her beauty: the air of the city, and the increasing round of dissipation, in which she had felt it her duty to engage, had robbed her cheeks of their brilliant rose-colour, and her figure of its roundness. This, however, only increased her beauty; and Buckingham swore a thousand times, "that her beauty excelled that of his sister, as much as the sun surpassed that of the moon."

Few only held this opinion: they acknowledged her surpassing beauty, but left her in order to admire and love the countless charms of Lady Buckingham. Some, however, asked why *her* lovely cheeks had become so pale—why her deep eyes now bore so melancholy an expression—why her beautiful mouth now so seldom smiled? And yet in that smile a heavenly mind showed itself; and she was the queen of every one's thoughts, the sovereign of their feelings and opinions. She was the favourite of the queen; the king smiled whenever she appeared, and he eagerly sought her in the multitude. People thought he would have conversed with her, had he ever known how to approach a woman; but he evinced his delight with strange motions of his head and hands, and if any one praised her, he said, as if giving his favourite the credit, "Steenie always pleases me: she is like him;" and then he added, quickly recollecting himself: "No, she is like another." He alluded to the picture of his mother, which he had shown to the Duke of Buckingham, with the intention of telling him the likeness; but his great pride would not allow it, and therefore the court was silent on the subject.

• Just at this time, Henry, Prince of Wales, was taken ill. Lord Archibald never left his couch; and Charles, who loved his brother tenderly, appeared no longer at court. Robert, now left by his friend and his brother, knew no other place than by the side of Lady Buckingham. Lost to all but her, his anxious eye could not but note her increasing melancholy, and the efforts of her affectionate

mother, the old countess, to support her through some secret grief, under which she appeared ready to succumb.

The moment arrived when England was robbed of her proudest hopes: Prince Henry ended his blooming and promising life in the arms of his brother. Lord Robert had passed this terrible night at Charles's feet. Lord Archibald, though weak from watching and from grief, bore the storm manfully: he prepared the king for the event, and brought the queen to the death-bed of his royal friend; and when Henry's last sigh freed his noble spirit, he sank for a few moments on the couch, hid his face in the cold hand of the deceased, and then quickly rose to assist the others. The unhappy Charles was carried senseless from the body of his brother: his fearful grief drew the afflicted royal pair from the contemplation of their loss and, made them fear that this their now only son was also about to be taken from them.

But Charles recovered himself: he rose from his couch, when his parents entered his room, and sank weeping at their feet; and when they blessed him, he said with a stifled voice, "Yes, I am now your only son." His head sank on the ground; and he was only roused by James's cry of anguish—"Save my son! save my last prince! he is dying!" when Charles rose, and remained standing until the physician, after recommending him to seek repose, had removed the afflicted parents. Without opposition, he was led to his couch: he made attempts to speak, but in vain; his lips remained closed.

He lay during the night in a state between waking and dreaming. At last he opened his eyes, and perceived the Earl of Derby, who was watching anxiously beside his couch. Beckoning him nearer, and signing to the other attendants to withdraw, he looked long at the favourite, and at last whispered to him a few words, which caused him to leave the sick chamber; and those who saw the young earl pass through the antechamber, pale as death, his eyes looking wildly around him, but without returning any answer to the greetings made to him, thought that death's giant power had also seized his youthful and beautiful form.

The present Prince of Wales, afterwards the unhappy Charles I.,

soon recovered: he knew that he must command his grief, in order to comfort his parents. Youth and cheerfulness appeared to have left him, and he stood like a man beside the king his father. The only thing which betrayed his inward suffering, was his increased love to his parents and his friends. He never appeared to have been so much attached to Robert as now.

But that young man was an enigma to all. After the first period of mourning had elapsed, he solemnly begged from the Earl of Bristol the hand of his daughter. He appeared to have forgotten his passionate love, and to have returned to that firmness of mind which had formerly so highly exalted him above all others. He obtained from the earl his permission for an interview with his daughter; he knelt at her feet, and with tears implored her to hear him; he brought her consent to his parents, and ever after showed himself the kindest and most attentive betrothed to the proud but reconciled lady.

The fathers hastened to the king, to ask his approval of the engagement; but James, confused, exclaimed, "My lords, what are you doing? Steenie wished to marry your lady!" But the Duke of Buckingham had never declared himself: which being made known to James, he gave his consent, praised the lovers, and yielded himself up to his usual kind humour.

Though the affair was so simple, and so easily settled, yet there were some strange, half-concealed, accessory circumstances. On the day of his betrothal, Robert had a violent scene with the Prince of Wales. The latter, from the most supplicating prayers, had changed to the greatest rage: a command for arrest was overheard to proceed from his mouth, but a long succeeding silence had prevented any further knowledge of what occurred. When the two friends appeared afterwards in the anteroom, their faces bore traces of violent emotion, but also of reconciliation.

Suddenly Buckingham appeared, unannounced; and after some angry words to the earl, which were unintelligible to those around, Charles commanded the attendants to retire. The dispute now threatened to overstep all bounds; Buckingham's voice was heard raging with violence; and though his words could not be distin-

guished, yet there were sharp eyes, which saw him raise his hand, as if menacing his prince. Robert seized it with giant strength, and rushed to the door, while the prince called for the guard, and ordered the duke to be arrested. Lord Robert prevented this; and Buckingham, who now appeared to have recovered himself, hastened, with incomprehensible threats, out of the room.

A visit to the king, by the prince, followed this event. The duke received orders to retire to his own estate; and Robert, accompanied by his brother, left London. When they returned, he said that his horse had thrown him, and hurt his arm; and various were the conjectures to which this occurrence gave rise. Lady Buckingham took her leave of the queen. She was dismissed with great kindness; but she was very pale, her eye was sorrowful, and her steps tottering. As she came out of the queen's apartment, she passed by the Earl of Derby, and respectfully bade him farewell. At this moment Lady Bristol looked timidly towards her betrothed lover; but his agitated face was bowed, in order to return the lady's greeting, as if she had been a crowned prince. Her eye rested sorrowfully upon the earl, and then she swept majestically away, never more to adorn the saloons of Whitehall.

The marriage of the young and noble couple took place soon afterwards; and as both wished for nothing more than to retire from a court, where they had become objects of attention, they obtained leave to reside at Godway Castle; while the Duke of Nottingham remained in London in order to make preparations for his embassy to Spain, whither the duchess and Lord Archibald accompanied him.

People said that the parting of Lord Derby and the prince had been extremely affecting. The latter had left London the day before the wedding, and did not see Lady Bristol until she had become the wife of his friend. She returned a few days after, but the world appeared dead to him, and the general gravity of his face had become melancholy. His first act was to beg the king to recall the Duke of Buckingham; for he knew well how deeply James had felt the humiliation of his favourite; and the joy which he showed at this request, gave the prince the sorrowful conviction, that the

king could sooner forgive the gross insult offered to his son, than the loss of his favourite. No one ever discovered the cause of that violent scene ; but it was certain that Lady Buckingham had refused, on the same day that Lord Derby was married, the young Earl of Carlisle. In answer to her brother's command that she should accept this offer, she said that she should never marry ; she added that her health had suffered from her residence in London, and that she wished to retire, with her mother, to the castle which the king had given them, and that she hoped never to leave it again.

This castle lay in a very lonely situation, surrounded by woods, and though it brought the family a good income, yet it appeared too gloomy ever to be inhabited by one bearing the brilliant name of Buckingham. The duke was highly enraged at the resolution of a sister, whose short appearance in public had led him to form ambitious plans, justified by the approbation she excited. She resisted the most revolting insults and affronts ; but when the duke reproached her with her affection for the Earl of Derby, and mocked her by telling her how he had forsaken her for another, she uttered the first exclamation of grief. Her cruel brother, angry at the recollection of his own loss, called God to witness that he would be revenged on Lord Robert, and she sank weeping at his feet, begging him never to do this. He indulged his anger, even to ill-treatment ; and she was found bleeding on the ground before him by her mother, who threatened to place her under the king's protection. The world thought that the quarrel with the prince had been the result of this scene, and that the duke was banished in a great measure to enable the unhappy mother and daughter to leave the court without molestation.

Buckingham returned even more haughty than ever. The prince took no notice of him, yet avoided every occasion of disturbing the peace which reigned at court. The same thing could hardly be said of the duke ; and the prince required the greatest moderation to maintain the decency, which the usurpations of Buckingham threatened to destroy.

For the first time, after many years, Charles saw his friend, the Duke of Nottingham (whose father had died in Spain), in Godway

Castle. A third child, the first daughter, had just been born to the happy pair. The long separation had not destroyed their friendship, for they had continually interchanged letters; and it struck all as strange, that the prince should have allowed so great a space of time to elapse, before he fulfilled his promise of visiting the seat of the Nottinghams. The duchess hid under a respectful demeanour the coldness which she felt towards him: she had been offended by the manner in which he had behaved at her marriage, which she understood as expressing disapprobation of her husband's choice, and her proud spirit could not forget this.

But the moment which the prince chose for seeing her again was a happy one. A daughter lay in her arms, and this called forth all her goodness and generosity. She hastened to meet her future king, accompanied by her two sons: her eyes shone with joy and pleasure; and never had her much admired and still unchanged beauty been more striking. The prince regarded her with astonishment; and what he said expressed pleasure and admiration, to which the proud woman could not remain indifferent.

He turned to embrace the earl, and said, with tears in his eyes, "Thank God, you are happy!"

And the duke had really become so. For this he had to thank, not only his own virtues, but those of his wife; and the passionate love which she bore him was amply returned by the duke.

From this time, the prince often visited Godway Castle, and he also frequently invited the duke to accompany him to one of his distant castles, where he often remained long, without any followers.

We will now pass over several years, to the time, and to the beautiful spring day, at which our story commences; regarding what we have here related as the necessary introduction to the family circumstances which we shall impart to our readers.

CHAPTER II.

However beautifully nature and art adorned the castle which we have been describing, however much was collected there for the happiness and enjoyment of life, yet the human forms which appeared in the landscape did not, at the moment when our story commences, correspond with the joyousness of nature around them.

A lady, in the mourning dress worn by widows of a higher rank, walked slowly up and down the castle terrace, accompanied at a respectful distance by two pages, whose sable attire showed that they were mourning some great loss to the house of Nottingham. Who would have been able to recognise, in that mournfully stooping female form, the once brilliant Countess of Bristol? Her eyes rested on the ground, and she seemed to have forgotten the world around her. Her face appeared white as marble, when contrasted with her black dress; and though her figure still retained a portion of its peculiar dignity, yet her head was sunk on the deep-heaving bosom, and she raised it only occasionally to cast a melancholy look towards the great hall of the castle, through the golden trellis-work of which might be seen the walls hung with black, and the gloomy light of the tall wax candles surrounding the bier, which was erected in that division of the hall nearest the chapel. A bier was there; but the beloved corpse rested not upon it—a deep sorrow to the tender wife, who was not permitted to close those eyes which had till now been the light of her existence.

The Duke of Nottingham had died in Spain, whither he had gone, with his eldest son, to visit his father-in-law, the Earl of Bristol, who was then engaged in negotiating the treaty of marriage between the Prince Charles and the Spanish Infanta. The news of his death had been received by the countess a month before; and she this day expected her beloved son, and the body of her dear husband. She had looked forward to this

melancholy meeting, delayed by the length of the journey, with great longing, for it appeared to her the only consolation which remained for her afflicted heart. The only desire this strong-minded and gentle woman seemed to have, was that of possessing these much-loved remains.

For this reason she often turned her tearless eyes towards the castle, hoping every moment to see some announcement of the wished-for arrival, by the opening of the doors of the hall, into which she looked, and which was filled by figures clad in mourning. Yet one creature followed her undisturbed, and so near that he touched the clothes of the sorrowful widow: this was Gaston, the favourite dog and faithful companion of the duke, who had been left at home, for the first time, while his master took this long journey. He was one of the most beautiful dogs in the kingdom, of an uncommon size, and true and affectionate in character. Since the duchess had been in grief, he had left his usual place in the entrance-hall, and had ever remained by her side. He now walked slowly and gravely with her, his ears hung down, and so entirely regardless of the garden and wood, in which he formerly found unceasing pleasure, that one could not avoid thinking that he foretold what was going to take place.

There was something very affecting in seeing him watching at times, as if commanded to do so, by his sorrowing mistress. At the end of the terrace, and as often as she stood still, he placed himself before her, and looked at her, as if he sympathized in her sorrow: if she went on without regarding him, he got up directly, and again followed her. But his conduct was more remarkable when the duchess reached the end of the terrace, which joined the wood, and leaned for a moment on a seat erected there. Suddenly becoming uneasy, and leaving the duchess, he appeared to seek for something, which his instinct had discovered; and after looking in every corner, he suddenly ran down the steps which led to the wood. His well-known bark was soon heard, followed by a long howl: he jumped back so violently on the terrace, that the duchess was roused from her own thoughts. He jumped upon her, howled

loudly, then turned suddenly back, and disappeared on the steps. For one moment only had this boisterous animal broken the current of his mistress's thoughts: she turned back slowly, when Gaston again sprang upon her, and abstracted her further progress; then flying with a loud howl to the staircase, and again returning to the duchess, he tried to prevent her going any further; and then seizing her dress between his teeth, he drew her to the steps.

The duchess, being now so violently roused by this faithful companion of her late husband, became attentive, and remarked that Gaston trembled violently, and seemed to wish her to accompany him. She immediately obeyed; and Gaston, setting up a howl of joy, ran to the steps, and waiting there until she approached, he sprang down before her. The duchess stood still on the first step, doubtful whether she should descend or not, when a sight appeared which changed her whole demeanour, and claimed her full attention. She showed by her exclamation, "Oh, Gaston!" that she fully understood the good intention of the animal, and advancing some steps, she saw a female figure, lying on the face, the arm stretched out, and either in a swoon or dead.

The lady looked hastily to find whether there were any signs of life; and as Gaston, approaching nearer to the object of his care, put his nose under the long brown hair, and then looked up at her, she perceived that he was stained with blood. This sight caused the affrighted duchess to call for help; and her servants, who had been watching Gaston's actions, but who had not ventured to follow their mistress, came quickly to her assistance. They found her almost unable to support herself, leaning on the parapet, and Gaston, with his charge, at her feet. Respectful timidity repressed their astonishment, but the duchess, upon seeing them approach, rose hastily, and the feeling of humanity overcoming all other emotion, she gave commands which were immediately obeyed.

The unhappy lady, having apparently slipped in ascending the steps, lay in such a position at the edge of one of these, that the least incautious movement would have precipitated her down the declivity amongst the trees below. Even Gaston, by his various attempts to move her, had rendered her position more dangerous: the

left sleeve of her dress was torn, and he had, with his paws, partly covered her arm with fresh earth.

As the pages approached to raise the figure, the duchess felt a strong disinclination that so young and delicate a form should be touched by men's hands; she therefore motioned them back, and ordered them to summon Mistress Morton and her own waiting women, to call Doctor Stanloff, and to bring a litter to the bottom of the terrace. Meanwhile she remained as if chained to the side of this unfortunate creature, doubting still whether she were alive. During these few moments, she made a discovery which increased her interest. Although no part of the young lady was visible except one hand and arm, and a profusion of brown hair which was spread round her like a cloak, yet the duchess could not but remark that the black dress which she wore, was of the form and material used by the higher ranks, and that this hand and arm were of a beauty which she had never before seen. But what increased her astonishment, was a bracelet, composed of the most splendid jewels, on the upper part of the left arm.

At length the desired help arrived. Morton's soft voice was heard; and the duchess, stretching her hands towards her, cried out, in great grief—"Oh! Morton, Morton, what has happened here? What a misfortune! perhaps even a crime has been committed within reach of this castle! Let her be moved gently, but by the women only. Where is Stanloff, that he may tell me whether she lives, or whether she died here without aid?"

Mistress Morton saw, with even greater emotion than such a strange occurrence as this could call forth, the change of mood which had taken place in her mistress: her thoughts were now drawn from herself; her heart was open to sympathy and humanity; and tears, which had never been called forth by her own sorrows, flowed at the sight of new and strange misery. Morton gently tried to solace her; and while the other women fulfilled her commands towards the stranger, she led the duchess back to the terrace. But she could not persuade her to go any further: she would herself see that nothing was neglected; and leaning on the parapet of the terrace, she looked down anxiously, and saw Gaston lying at the

feet of the stranger, and assiduously engaged in licking the blood from her wounds.

"Oh, Morton," cried she, "what a kind heart this animal has! What an example for us all!"

The women now approached with their burden, and laid it on the litter, which was standing close by. Morton stepped forward, parted the hair from the lady's forehead, and a young and beautiful but deathlike face was displayed.

She had stood considering some moments, as if seized by some dark recollection, when the duchess stepped hastily up to her. Morton turned towards her, and saw that she trembled with agitation: she looked for an instant at the deadly pale face before her; and then staring wildly around her, exclaimed in agony, "Good God! what woman is this?"

Nobody could answer this question; and the servants stood gazing with affright at the condition of the duchess, until Morton, who wished for no further witnesses, made a sign to them to carry away the litter.

Some moments now passed in silence; but at length the duchess slowly arose, and, as if all strength had left her, she said, in a weak voice, "Take me away, dear Morton: it is too much for me. I am ill; I wish to lie down. Ah! what has happened around me? How can I live through what is so severe beyond all measure?—Can you understand it?"

But Morton, by her answers, could only attempt to interrupt the melancholy thoughts of the countess.

Since she had received intelligence of the duke's death, the unhappy widow had expressed no wish for repose: she had not even shed a tear, or spoken more than to give the requisite commands; and the good Doctor Stanloff had waited with much anxiety for some change in her mood. Morton, who had shared his cares, now saw this much wished-for change suddenly and unexpectedly brought about: her beloved mistress had wept, spoken, and expressed want of repose. These all appeared good signs; and the faithful servant felt so much joy thereat, that the late strange event was almost entirely forgotten by her.

They slowly approached the castle, and Morton wished very much

that she could have led her beloved mistress, whose tottering steps she supported, to her own apartments by some other way than through these halls, where the sight of the melancholy preparations might produce fresh agitation. But some other deep feeling appeared to be awakened in the mind of the duchess, which acted as a counterpoise to her former heavy grief.

Morton felt her steps become firmer as they approached the entrance to the castle; and when Doctor Stanloff met her, she drew herself up with her usual dignity, and motioning him back with her hand, she said firmly, "We do not need your aid: but where were you at the moment that your presence was necessary to relieve us from the uncertainty which we felt concerning the life of an unhappy creature? The uncertainty, I say; but God forbid that so dreadful a crime should have been committed close to our castle."

She stepped forward firmly as she said this, and leaving Morton's arm, called to one of the numerous servants. "Jephson," said she, "this does not appear to me a fitting place for the important examination as to whether life or death exists." And she drew back Stanloff's arm just as he was going to raise the black veil with which some of the attendants had covered the stranger's face. "We wish, in this case, to second the efforts of our good and experienced doctor, by finding a fitting abode for his patient, and appropriate for this purpose the room in the left wing, which was used as an antechamber to the apartments occupied by his royal highness the Prince of Wales, and which easily communicates, through the tower of the chapel, with Mistress Morton's chamber, to whose particular care and attention we will give this lady; that is, if God hears our prayers, and vouchsafe us the blessing of having saved her life."

Jephson, the head bailiff of the castle, whose hair was as white as the staff of office which he held in his hand, bowed respectfully at these orders; and accompanied by Morton, and other servants, who bore the litter, went through the great doors to the anteroom, from which the above-mentioned wing was reached by a gallery only used on extraordinary occasions.

Doctor Stanloff was about to follow, when the duchess called him

back, and said, in a firm voice—"I know you well, doctor. You will use to the utmost that well-tried skill which has so often saved many dear to us—you will, I say, use this skill to awaken her into life, and thus prevent so frightful an occurrence as a murder in our neighbourhood. When I have reached my room, Morton shall assist you. Take the rest of my women with you; and, above all things, let the dress and ornaments she wears be laid aside with care, and without exciting curiosity in those around her: they may, if God so will it, lead to some knowledge of those to whom she belongs."

Stanloff, the old and faithful servant of the house of Nottingham, saw that a desire of expiating some fault into which her proud disposition had led her, prompted the words of his respected mistress. Her naturally tender conscience and noble mind gave an easy victory over her feelings in time of trouble, and instilled in those around her a mixture of fear and love, which was used with so much tact, that she acquired an unusual control over the minds of all. From Stanloff, who saw with joy that equilibrium restored in her mind which had been so fearfully destroyed, she had nothing to fear in opposition to her views. The vehemence of her manner, and the reproach contained in the first words which she addressed to him, partook so much of her own natural style of expression, that he was at once satisfied that her mind had returned to its usual course. He kissed, with emotion, her offered hand; and having ventured to repeat once more those directions for her own health, to which she gave so little heed, and which she still less practised, he left her presence with a lighter heart.

The duchess turned to Morton, and said, sorrowfully—"Take me away: this sight appears to annihilate my reason."

She was about to leave the hall, when the distant sound of a horn fell upon her ear. After a moment's delay, this was answered by the warder at the gate of the bridge, and afterwards from the towers of the castle. This announced the arrival of the melancholy procession. The duchess stood still for a moment, as if overpowered by her feelings: her hands were folded on her breast, and her eyes turned upwards. She then knelt down, and bowed her head in prayer. The servants knelt in a circle around her, and the

solemn stillness of the scene was broken only by the sobs of the attendant women. Her two daughters, followed by their ladies, entered during this silent act of devotion, and she raised her tear-bedewed face, and greeting them with a melancholy smile, beckoned them to stand near her.

It was some time after the first sound of the horn at the bridge had, according to the old custom, demanded entrance, that the train arrived at the castle. As soon as it reached the first court, Jephson hastened to the hall to announce its arrival to the duchess; but when he saw her surrounded by her attendants, and kneeling in prayer, he sank on the ground, and remained silent for some moments. However, again remembering his duty, he arose, and stretching out his staff, said, with a solemn voice—

“It has pleased the all-powerful God to protect the illustrious son and heir of this noble house during his journey, and to enable him to fulfil the filial duty of bringing the mortal remains of his father, the late duke, to the castle of his ancestors. He now tarries at the gate, and begs leave of our noble mistress to enter.”

Rising from her knees, and supported by her daughters, the lady answered, with a deep but firm voice—“God bless his footsteps over the threshold of his fathers.”

The outer doors were immediately opened, and those who were in the hall beheld the castle court filled with figures, clad in mourning.

King James, alike to evince his sympathy with the widow, and to do honour to his minister, had sent Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, the uncle to the deceased duke, to Godway Castle, where he arrived on the preceding day. As soon as this renowned man heard that his young nephew had entered the ancestral domain, he, together with the relations who had assembled there to receive the corpse, hastened to meet him, and assisted in forming the procession, which was to proceed in due order from the court to the rooms of the castle. The body was then taken from the vehicle, in which it had been brought, and borne on the shoulders of six young noblemen. Jephson preceded it, holding in his hand his staff of office, and was followed

by the tenantry and the superior officers of the castle, among whom was Sir Edward Ramsey, who, as chamberlain, held the highest rank.

Next came the numerous noblemen of the surrounding country, at whose head was Sir William Ollincroft, the principal person in the county, over which the ducal family held a kind of sovereignty. Twelve pages, wearing epaulettes of the colours of the ducal house, walked by the side of the young nobleman, carrying the insignia of the duke's rank and the military orders of the deceased. Immediately behind the corpse, were the relations, at the head of whom was Robert, Earl of Derbery, the duke's eldest son and heir, accompanied by Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, followed by various relatives and strangers; and the servants of all those present brought up the rear.

Only a small space now separated the duchess from the beloved remains of him who had been the source of her greatest happiness, and from that dear son, for whose health and life she had so often trembled. The excess of her feelings gave her strength, instead of utterly overpowering her, as her attendants had feared; and when the chaplain passed from the chapel to bless the corpse, she calmly rose, and taking the hands of her two daughters, followed him, as if she scorned to withdraw the last arrow of grief from her sorrowing breast. The bier had stopped on the doorway to receive the blessing of the church, and the duchess stood at a little distance, surrounded by her servants. She now, for the first time, looked at her son, whose youthful beauty appeared to be chased away by the pallor caused by his deep grief; but the expression of his eye touched her heart, and awakened all her motherly feelings. The solemnity of the moment prevented their approaching each other, and at the given sign these two afflicted ones knelt in prayer. Who would say that they needed words to make this prayer intelligible to God?

Before the procession reached the hall of mourning, Robert threw himself at the feet of his mother, and received her blessing; and as they embraced each other, they felt that nature had given them consolation under their unspeakably great loss.

Conducted by Lord Salisbury and her son, the duchess reached

the end of the hall, and seated herself upon a raised chair, opposite the bier : her daughters knelt at her feet, and at the head of the corpse stood Lord Robert ; at the foot, the Earl of Salisbury. The rest of the suite filled the space around, only leaving vacant a raised seat bearing the ducal coronet, which stood by the side of the duchess.

This seat did not long remain empty ; for a lady, supported by two women, and followed by several pages, came out of the chapel. The duchess and her daughters immediately rose, and approached her with every mark of respect. She was old, and snow-white hair surrounded her delicate face, the peaceful expression of which was not destroyed by her present sorrow, but seemed to give her the appearance of a being belonging to another world, who at the same time shared, with the mildness of an angel, the sorrows of those around her. This was the Earl of Salisbury's sister, the Countess of Burleigh, widow of Robert, Duke of Nottingham, and mother of the deceased duke. She had felt it hard that her son should be taken away before her ; but the hope of being soon united to him, took the bitterness from her grief ; and thinking only of her beloved daughter-in-law and her dear grandchild, she had quitted her retirement, in order to endeavour to soften their sorrows by her presence. Hitherto, she had succeeded in producing but little effect upon the wife of her son, who remained to her, as to all others, inaccessible, even to such a degree, that, after having performed the duties of respect towards the noble mother of her husband, in a manner so bewildered that it seemed as if the body merely moved as it had been accustomed to do, she retired from her presence with a kind of anxious timidity. Yet, in the presence of the corpse of her beloved, the mother appeared to regain her influence ; and the few words which, with a tremulous voice, she addressed to the lady, showed that the bark was sprung, which threatened to smother the heavily-laden heart. The number of witnesses compelled the ladies to control their feelings, in order that they might be able to fulfil the last duties to the deceased ; for it was a custom imposed upon the females of this house, to attend the interment of their husbands.

When the old duchess had led her daughter-in-law back to her

seat, and had taken her own place, the chaplain began the service, by blessing the body, the covering of which was then raised in order to prove its identity to the assembly. It had always been the practice of the race of Nottingham, for the widow first to approach the corpse, and, after she had looked at it, to raise its hand, in attestation that it was really there. This was also done by the nearest relations; and thus the assurance was conveyed to those assembled.

When this moment arrived, Robert sprang from the place in which he had kneeled in deep devotion, and, before the duchess could reach the corpse, he had thrown himself at her feet, and appeared to be imploring some request with much earnestness. At the same time, urged by Salisbury's persuasions, he clasped his arms around her, as if he would even use force to restrain her. Those present guessed that the beloved son wished to spare his mother the sorrowful sight; for as more than a month had elapsed since the duke's death, the features were much altered, in despite of all the precautions that had been taken.

But the lady, inexorable and even angry, commanded him to rise. A slight blush overspread her pale face, and she said, as if unwillingly, but in an audible voice—"Do you think me weaker than the noble women who have done this before me?"

The young man rose, and, as his last resource, directed his eyes towards his grandmother. But even she appeared not to regard him, for her delicate feelings told her that the duchess would not yield. She felt that to omit the duty, which her heart desired to fulfil, and which should be performed in presence of all her relations and friends, would betoken a weakness inconsistent with that dignity and strength of mind, which suited her character and situation in the world. Confidence in her daughter-in-law lay in her clear but sympathizing eye, and showed that she trusted in her doing that which she herself, and so many others before her, had already done.

Nor was she mistaken. Robert's opposition had only served to impart new strength to his mother. Her pride was aroused; and her displeasure at this interruption of the solemn ceremonies, imbued

her with fortitude to conquer her weakness. Beckoning to her son and the Earl of Salisbury to retire, she approached the head of the corpse with a dignified step. The body, wrapped in a large cloak, now lay uncovered before her straining eyes: the head, once adorned with all the graces of manly dignity—those features, once so full of feeling and kindness, were now dried and shrivelled, like a yellow mask; and the strong-minded woman was nearly overcome on beholding that strange and scarcely human face, instead of the one so dear to her. Fear took possession of her faculties, and every thing around her disappeared from her sight: another such moment, and consciousness would have wholly departed from her mind, which threatened to sink under this misery. The anxiety among those around her was great, for her fearful situation was displayed in her features, and in her wild staring eyes.

But God still sustained her: her face soon lost its fearful expression, and peace, increasing to perfect repose, returned to her mind. Her eye rested with tenderness on the frightful picture before her, for she had recognised the beautiful curling hair, which adorned the head in unusual abundance, and which death could not destroy. Her consciousness returned, and she resumed her usual self-control. The feeling of having recognised him she loved, and of possessing his remains, filled her with a species of delight, which acted the more powerfully from its being so closely preceded by terror. She raised her head: a smile illumined her face; and taking the white hand, she held it up, and looking around with an expression of perfect security, her lips trembling as if to find words, she stood for a few moments, as if calling each of the assembly to bear witness to her conviction. The impression made on those around was indescribable: admiration succeeded to deep emotion; and an inarticulate murmur from many hundreds of voices resounded through the hall.

This aroused the duchess from her thoughts: she felt that she had been the object of attention; and with her strong ideas of womanly feeling and dignity, she could not endure this. She allowed herself to be led away by her son and Lord Salisbury; and her proud demeanour removed all recollection from those around her of her earlier agitation.

After all the others had passed round the body, two heralds placed themselves on either side of the canopy which was erected over the bier. The one on the left side bore the mourning banner, on a white staff, and announced the death of the duke, naming his titles and dignities, and concluding with a louder voice, in these words:—

“And as the illustrious head of this house now rests before us in everlasting peace, leaving the ducal chair vacant, and as a successor to this is required, we ask those relations here present, and also the nobles of the county of Nottingham, whether this race yet exists, or whether it is extinct? We would know whether we, by virtue of the office with which we are invested, must break the escutcheon and sink it with this corpse in everlasting oblivion? We ask, three times, is the race extinct?”

The Earl of Salisbury, as the nearest male relation of the deceased now stepped forward with dignity, drew his sword, turned it to the herald, and then touching three times with its point the breast of the deceased duke, called out loudly, the same number of times, “No!”

“Where then is the new Duke of Nottingham?” demanded the same herald; and at that moment all who were present drew their swords from the scabbards, and the hall echoed with their shouts; while the Earl of Derby, rising from his place, and laying his hand on the head of the corpse, called out three times—“Here!”

The pages hastened to put the robes upon his shoulders; and the Earl of Salisbury, taking the ducal coronet from a cushion which the pages presented to him, placed it on the head of his grand-nephew. He then led him under the canopy, and desired him to take the empty chair; while the richly adorned heralds displayed the banner and escutcheon of the young duke, and loudly and solemnly proclaimed him successor to the title. Those present now walked up to him, and hailing him as the new duke, touched the ground with the points of their swords; then, having bowed to the duchess, they withdrew.

During this long ceremony, the duchess had remained seated in

her chair ; but when the last servant had left the hall, and she was surrounded only by her children, her mother-in-law, and the Earl of Salisbury, she fell from her seat, without any sign of life. Her children, terrified by this circumstance, hastened to her assistance ; but Doctor Stanloff instantly came to their aid, and relieved their fears by assuring them that it was only a swoon, the consequence of over-excitement, and that she required nothing but that repose which all so much needed after the trying scenes of this mournful day.

As the night was already far advanced, each now retired to his own apartment ; and in a short time nothing was heard in these halls, which had so lately been the scene of so much activity, but the hourly responses of the sorrowing watchers, relieving guard.

CHAPTER III.

The unconscious constraint which, sanctified by long custom, holds sway over the minds of men, is often a benevolent assistance to the spirit, driven from its course by passion or exciting events. This has a good effect in the smallest circle of duties, and makes itself equally valuable in a wider sphere of life. It instructs us that few only are appointed to break through forms long become unmeaning, and to throw away the shell from the time-ripened kernel. These last drops of a new perception cause the overflowing of the well-filled vessel, to which the stillness of time has already contributed so many single drops. They have no scale or proportion, for they are the first of their kind ; but many persons easily misinterpret in themselves a passionate excitement, which appears to give them the right to overthrow or break through customs contrived by virtuous ancestors, after comprehending whole generations and protecting them from arbitrary roughnesses. It is so difficult to put the better in the place of the long existing, that experience makes us reconciled to deficiency ; and so insufficient and superficial are the results

of each change, that a quiet and reserved spirit inclines to it more easily, where virtuous men give security for its stability. A reformation also is ripened by time; to which glorious end each one advantageously contributes who restrains within himself the free development of his strength. That which deserts us during this time, and will no more belong to us, is ripe for decay, yielding, not to caprice, but to the age. The strongest spirits reach this point the most easily: repose and true mildness have always their seat in the consciousness of strength: it is no contradiction if we find ourselves reconciled to the form when we can break through it; this simply showing that the obstacle does not disturb the higher question; and the feeling of being able to break through the peculiar course makes us the peaceable companion of the already trodden way.

We feel ourselves, by means of this free outpouring of our opinion, involuntarily carried back to the person who next attracts our attention—Lord Richmond Derbery, the second son of the Duchess of Nottingham. This nobleman, some days after the burial of his father, had returned, with his uncle, already known to us as Lord Archibald, from an embassy from King James to his unfortunate son-in-law, the Elector Palatine; and having, on the road, heard the sorrowful news, they hastened to Godway Castle. We will not touch upon the sad scenes of such a meeting. To persons who felt towards each other as much reverence as love, such moments taught the full value of a dignified self-control, which veiled the violent emotions of the heart by a noble decency. The deep solemnity which takes the place of sorrowful agitation showed itself less than one is accustomed to see. The arrival of these noblemen had an unmistakeable influence upon the returning free demeanour of all in the castle. There was, in their quiet manners, something so pleasingly attractive, and at the same time so enlivening, that each strove to perform his duty unasked. While the insignificant felt themselves pleasantly elevated, and the higher ranks lived in the delightful feeling of mutual regard, others were guided by a control, which, unconscious, and seeming never to be required, must be attributed to the gentle dominion which remarkable minds involuntarily exercise.

Among those oppressed by this dominion we must reckon, though with some diffidence, the greatest statesman of his time, the Earl of Salisbury. We have said that he undertook the education of his nephew, Lord Archibald, on his return from France; and seeing in him the same great qualities that he possessed himself, he adopted the plan of bringing him forward as his assistant—perhaps, at a future period, his successor. But during this education something occurred which went beyond either the expectations or the designs of the earl. Seeing that his nephew was closely knit to himself by relationship and instruction, he sent him occasionally on apparently unimportant missions to the different courts at which England had ambassadors; by this means often compassing ends which would have been opposed had their object been openly avowed, and throwing into his hands puppet wires which the king and his ministers knew how to manage with dexterity. From the nature of these employments Lord Archibald had acquired a perfect knowledge of all weighty affairs in Europe, then so agitated by political and religious movements. His scholastic accomplishments, and, still more, the acute glance of his comprehensive mind, had led him to form views superior to that system, according to which James, with short-sighted policy and womanish weakness, excluded himself from all the magnanimous emotions which claimed his sympathy on so many sides. The king refused this sympathy in order to maintain a peace, which, during his whole reign, sank the credit of England, raised so high by Queen Elizabeth. The reproaches of Europe towards the King of England, redounded on his ministers, especially on the Earl of Salisbury, to whose name a renown was attached, which, after the death of Elizabeth, he seemed unable to maintain.

Lord Archibald felt this with deep grief; and excited by the odium to which the king was subjected, and still more by that levelled against his uncle, he ventured to lay before the latter his own views, which proved only too clearly that the talents of the nephew were matured. The earl was now most unwillingly compelled to acknowledge, that here, in the arena of which he believed himself the sole master, flattering himself that the whole continent recognised the perfect dominion of his policy, views had developed

themselves which had not only escaped his notice, but which must throw blame upon all his actions. The more evident this became to the clear mind of the experienced statesman, the more did the wound rankle which his proud heart had received; and he who had ventured to inflict this fatal blow upon his policy, would have been sacrificed to his excited feelings, but that his favourite was protected by a mistrustful coldness. The bounds of confidence were now defined; and he felt with pain that his nephew's superiority, of which he had never before entertained the slightest suspicion, had now raised a complete wall of separation between them. His discontent at the approbation which he had before encouraged was now easily excited; and his wounded pride clothed his manners with all the authority of a minister and an uncle. Archibald quickly perceived the great offence he had given; but the gratitude and respect which he felt was evinced by a tender devotion which must have reconciled any heart but one hardened by flattery and pride, and wounded in its vain self-trust. No doubt now remained to the earl; and to a high degree of pride was added a self-confidence too confirmed to permit him longer to trouble himself about reconciliation with a relative who had often repressed his opinions; and this self-confidence was doubly confirmed by the deep glance which he had taken into the contracted mind of his uncle. Both were too prudent, however, to allow the world to witness their separation. The Earl of Salisbury had too often proclaimed Lord Archibald his pupil, not now to sustain him upon the public eminence to which he had attained; therefore, in removing him out of his reach, he placed him in a situation which it required talent to fill.

The earl was sent to Henry IV., at Paris, whither he was accompanied by his nephew, Richmond of Derby, notwithstanding his tender youth. It was extremely gratifying to all who felt an interest in these two persons, to perceive the affection with which the Earl of Glanford clung to his nephew, although he had appeared to shun all others since the death of his father, and of his friend the Prince of Wales; and this, as is not unusual, for the sake of qualities upon which the earl would have been least expected to place a decided value—namely, a brilliancy of mind and tenderness of spirit

which would have adorned a woman's character. The whole character of Richmond was influenced by delicate forbearance towards others. He perceived, as it were intuitively, what wounded and what gratified them, and knew so well how to blend the one with the other, that a security was felt in his presence which is the privilege exercised by noble and amiable minds over rude souls—a quiet power, of which they can give no explanation, but which unconsciously impels them to moderation.

It must be confessed that these virtues were not possessed by his distinguished uncle, who, under that extraordinary self-control and politeness which he had acquired from the study of life in various situations and under peculiar circumstances, concealed a certain sharpness and coldness of character, which, however, was never so wholly depressed, as not to display itself where there was no motive for concealing it. This, whilst it imparted a kind of reserve, supported the dignity which was part of his character; and he regarded it as of slight importance, that this had been acquired at the expense of his heart's affection. Yet there are moments in which the internal vacancy is not to be supplied from external circumstances; and when the whole edifice of proud greatness satisfies not the demands which the heart warningly repeats, however little it may be authorized to do so. In such moments he had embraced the son of his brother, in whose peculiarities he saw himself reflected. His nephew was given up to him by the father with joy, and by the mother with the greater self-denial, because she was particularly attached to this child; and if, in her outward bearing, she did not betray the extent of her inward feeling, she was clear-sighted enough to perceive the noble character which had early made him her favourite. Latterly, she became reconciled to the thought of seeing him grow up under strangers eyes; for whilst she could not deny that no one was more fitted to develop the mental excellences of a young man than Lord Archibald, she was also satisfied that this mental development had called forth a worthy balance to the tender softness of his heart. Lord Archibald, knowing the mother's sacrifice, never omitted an opportunity of bringing him to her; and the duchess was, at last, not indifferent to the prospects to which her

son might look forward through his uncle. For it was doubtful whether the earl had foresworn marriage out of love to his nephew, or whether he had previously determined not to marry: the main point remained decided—that the earl would not marry, and that Richmond would be his heir.

After many years' residence at the court of Versailles, the earl wished to return to his family; for since the death of Henry IV. he had not been bound by any tie to France, and he longed to revisit his estates. Richmond now passed the greater part of his time with the duchess; and this was a period of great happiness to her, for her favourite appeared to her perfect, and she saw united in him those rare qualities which made her proud maternal heart swell with pure joy.

The two brothers were as different in person as in disposition. Robert had a clear fair complexion, an amiable expression, and a beautiful figure. Richmond possessed the regular features of his mother: he was as tall as his brother, his form was perfect in its proportions, and grace pervaded all his movements. His eye was grave, and there was something earnest in his demeanour, which led one to think him cold and proud, particularly as he spoke but little, and with reserve. But this reserve was the effect of the high ideas he had of the moderation which he thought befitted the dignity of his character, and it evinced the self-control he exercised over himself, for his sensitive heart continually tempted him to yield to his feelings. His respect for the will of his parents was the greater, because he had never been brought so near them, by the circumstances of his education, as to become acquainted with their weaknesses. His mother appeared to him incomparably the best woman in the world, and he was attached to his father with tender respect and affection. In the family circle he displayed an amiability which betrayed the deeper feelings of his heart; and the duchess, who rarely laid aside her reserve, received his attentions and caresses with gentleness, for she knew that the respect by which they were dictated rendered it impossible for him to overstep the bounds of filial propriety. He had the high forehead and the dark curling hair of his mother; but the

pride which was expressed by his noble brow, rarely appeared in his eyes, except when called forth by any sudden or violent emotion. The brilliancy of these beautiful eyes was softened by the long brown lashes, and their usual expression was a quiet gravity.

Both brothers were tenderly attached to one another, but the elder acknowledged with pride and joy that his younger brother was his superior. Richmond's firm mind, which deemed no sacrifice too great to be paid for what was right, easily gave the law to the good-natured compliance of his brother, and Robert obeyed like a cheerful child; for Richmond asked what he required in so kind a manner, that the enjoyment of yielding was greater than the sacrifice demanded.

The young man held himself aloof from the Earl of Salisbury, who did not understand him. He had reported well of him; and thinking him formed for a courtier, had for that purpose first taken him to educate, as the heir of his uncle.

Circumstances did not long remain in this state; for when he proceeded to Germany, Cecil perceived that his nephew had peculiar opinions, upon which he did not hesitate to act with uprightness and firmness, however contrary they might be to those of his uncle; whilst his gentleness and obedience seemed ruffled by resistance. He therefore yielded up Richmond to Lord Archibald, who would no more be separated from him. Not understanding his nephew, and entertaining an indescribable and secret fear in his presence, Cecil suspected that in him might be hidden a spirit which would one day oppose his own; and feeling himself uneasy with both his relatives, he thought of returning to London on the day after their arrival. With this view he made a visit to his niece; and then requested Lord Archibald to attend him in the hall, where he was walking up and down, meditating upon what he should say to him.

A beautiful spring day shone through the delicate golden lattice-work of the lofty doors, enlivening the gloomy halls, which were now divested of their sorrowful ornaments. A thousand glistening forms of antique grandeur received and reflected the brilliant light, offering a sight as beautiful as rare, for seldom did the light of day penetrate here. The grave and thoughtful appearance of the old

minister suited well with his mourning dress and the solemn apartment; but the world, which was breaking into joyful life without, was lost to him. The pure light of heaven, and the warm air of spring, everywhere aroused slumbering nature into activity. At such a season every hour appears to bring new pleasures, exciting an endless desire to live among the buds and leaves, or with the busy worms and caterpillars of the breathing earth; and to listen to the secrets, which, from the shooting grass to the gentle efforts of the early flowers, awaken our sympathy and tenderness. The adjoining wood, the countless little bushes upon and near the terrace, were a rendezvous for building and singing birds; and the Gothic decorations of the halls were filled with nests, whose inhabitants, fluttering about the lattices, sang their joyful songs to the old statesman, who, in his grave dignity, could not condescend to listen or to feel.

He reached the centre hall, and the inquiring glance which he cast towards the entrance betokened his repugnance at having to wait here for some minutes; when, through the doors which led from the outer hall, Lord Archibald approached, hastening his steps as he perceived his uncle. Lord Salisbury remained on the same spot whilst his nephew came towards him; and Lord Archibald, knowing by the outstretched foot of the earl that he had been delayed longer than he thought consistent with his dignity, began, whilst yet at a distance, to excuse himself with a modesty and politeness, which, when expressed in so formal a manner, betrays that spirit of irony from which, it must be admitted, Lord Archibald was not wholly free.

Cecil murmured something incomprehensible, and was preparing to explain why he had sent for his nephew, when the latter, taking advantage of the brief pause, expressed his regret at having heard from his sister-in-law that Lord Salisbury must leave the castle on the following day; adding, that he could not longer delay making a request in the name of his nephew. This was, permission for the latter to accompany Lord Salisbury to London, in order to tender his oath of allegiance to the king. Lord Archibald also requested the honour of accompanying him; his sister-in-law having dismissed him

from her presence, leaving all family matters unarranged until the first duty of her son to his sovereign should have been fulfilled.

Lord Salisbury could scarcely conceal his displeasure at the flattering and submissive request of his nephew; for he had intended to make the same proposal, but with such expressions as should show his sense of his own dignity, and at the same time evince his displeasure at the negligence which, in his opinion, had been shown in their having so long overlooked this important step on the part of the young duke. The reverential explanation of Lord Archibald had, for a moment, divested him of his importance, bringing him down from his ceremonious height of displeasure, to acknowledge, reasonably and obligingly, the friendliness which made his nephew wish to join his suite to London. The pretence for requiring Lord Archibald's attendance would easily have been found by this subtle and adroit man; but an event now occurred which required his undivided attention.

The chief secretary, Gilbert, appeared at the entrance of the hall, and receiving permission to approach the Earl of Salisbury, gave him some letters, which a courier had just brought from London. Lord Archibald would have retired: but Lord Salisbury perceived, with astonishment and pleasure, the private seal of the king on one of the letters, and some Latin writing, in which, chiefly from vanity, James carried on his private correspondence. When Gilbert withdrew, Cecil requested Lord Archibald to remain, and proceeded to open the letter, remarking on the graciousness of the king in writing to him with his own hand. He had proceeded no further than the first line when he turned pale, and appeared about to faint. His eye wandered timidly over the page, and was then fixed upon his nephew with such an expression, that, full of alarm, the latter hastened to him, seizing his arm with anxiety.

"Archibald," said the earl, in a weak voice, "what have they ventured to achieve in my absence! How unprecedentedly am I deceived, and what misery has overtaken us all!"

Although Lord Archibald could not guess the cause of his uncle's violent emotion, it awakened the sympathy which he had formerly felt, and extinguished the reserve which had lately existed between

them. The aged earl required a confidential friend, and he knew that he should find one in his nephew. This was a consolation which he neither could nor would deny himself. Seating himself in the chair which his nephew brought to him, he gave him the king's letter, of which he had been unable to read more than the first few lines. But these were enough to explain the agitation of the minister, and the angry astonishment of Lord Archibald. The king wrote as follows; and his style showed that he was in a wretched humour:—

“What will you say, my dear faithful Cecil, when I write to tell you that I am inconsolable, and a poor deserted daddy; for my dear son and Buckingham would take no denial, and are gone to Spain; Baby insisting upon wooing the Infanta like any other man, unbecoming as it is. I have a thousand times wished you here, for you would certainly have persuaded him from it. But as you were away, and Buckingham wished it, there was no preventing it. I am quite inconsolable, for they have been gone many days; and whether my eyes will ever see my only son again, that God alone knows! I wish you would not any longer leave your king.

“JAMES.”

The second letter was from Lord Hertford, confirming the king's news with many details; from which it was apparent that a reconciliation had taken place between Charles and Buckingham, in consequence of which the duke promoted, with all his influence, the wish of the prince to go to Spain; and set the business so secretly and quickly in progress, that the king had not had time to recover his senses, still less had any of his ministers or councillors been able to prevent it.

“Why was I not there!” cried Lord Salisbury, springing with all his strength from his chair. “Oh, the spiritless, degenerate men, who think more of themselves, than of the welfare of their kingdom and royal house! Had I caught this Buckingham, at the peril of my gray head would I have accused him before the throne of my weak king; and, as truly as God lives, only over my corpse should the dear prince, the pride of our land, have overstepped the boundaries of true England, in order to set his foot in a foreign popish

country, to be a mockery to our enemies. Oh, Archibald! are we free from witnesses? You see I cannot compose myself. This step makes us the sport of all foreigners. God forbid that anything should happen to the holy person of our dear prince by the conduct of man; but even the happiest result will destroy the attainment of those well-arranged plans with which you are acquainted, and which partly occasioned your mission to Germany. Our enemies will know how to use the superiority which this foolish affair gives them. God grant it may not have worse consequences!"

Lord Archibald was too zealous a servant of the state not to share the feelings of his uncle in all their intensity. He immediately perceived the incaution and risk of this step, and could not but understand the grief of the old man, towards whom he felt himself irresistibly attracted. The sincere attachment of Cecil to the royal family which he served, and which revived all the tender feelings of his breast, won his respect and gratitude. This precipitate conduct of the prince only too certainly destroyed the equipoise, which, as to demands and concessions, had till now been maintained with so masterly a hand by the Earl of Bristol.

The two men walked up and down in close conversation; and the confidential manner of the earl, and his use of the Christian name of his nephew, as in earlier times, showed clearly the deep agitation of the aged noble. Both decided on commencing their journey without delay, since a closer attention to their public duties would be requisite, and the instructions necessary for the Earl of Bristol were pressing, and of grave importance. Lord Archibald hastened to give the orders requisite for their departure, whilst the earl went to his sister and niece to acquaint them with the king's letter, and the steps consequent upon it.

CHAPTER IV.

The following morning the castle was deserted by its numerous visitors. We will therefore now withdraw into its inner apartments, and ascertain what has been there transpiring, worthy of our attention.

The unhappy object of Gaston's efforts demands our first inquiry. The morning after she was discovered, Doctor Stanloff brought the pleasing intelligence to the duchess, that his patient was returning to consciousness. She had not moved, but she showed signs of life by the increasing warmth of her limbs, and by a very faint pulse. The wound on her head was not of much importance, being only the result of her fall on the steps, and the loss of blood was not sufficient to account for her swoon. Her feet were swollen and cut, from which those around her concluded that she had travelled some distance without rest or nourishment.

"Doctor," said the duchess, "what a frightful story. Great God! can it be true? Why frighten me so unnecessarily with such a horrible relation? What can be the circumstances which led to the want of food, the most easily supplied of all our wants?"

Stanloff was silent for a moment, and then answered gravely—"Those who have never felt the want of necessaries always think that whatever nature requires can be immediately and gratuitously obtained. But it is not so: thousands struggle with life at a price of which those who are rich know nothing, because they never know the want of what is so struggled for."

There was something so impressive in these words, that the duchess raised her head, and looked at the good doctor with a deep sigh. After a few moments of reflection, she continued:—"Yet you must confess that there is something frightful and incomprehensible in any one of this rank, and so young that she must be under the guardianship of others, dying from hunger."

"You are right, my lady," answered the doctor. "I agree with you that this beautiful creature must have suffered much

sorrow ; and perhaps God has thrown her into your hands, in order that she may be perfectly restored."

"God will lay on me whatever I am able to bear," said the duchess ; while her whole frame seemed to tremble by some agitation produced by these last words, and she leaned her head on her hand, the tears flowing slowly down. "I am agitated, good Stanloff, and also weaker than usual ; but who would not be so, who has had such sorrow as mine ? Loud complaints do not ease me, and I am not the less alive to whatever of joy or sorrow this rich world offers ; but those who have had sorrow in their youth, and have been obliged to conceal that sorrow, have also forgotten the outward means of relief by which so many rid themselves of the burden which in secret consumes their mind. Go, good Stanloff, true and faithful servant ; your noble heart understands much ; but," added she smiling sorrowfully, as she withdrew her hand from her bedewed eyes, and held it out to him—"Whatever struggles in this weak heart against time, reason, and even higher admonitions, that let your sharp eye not divine, and then it will be well with me. But if you often see me—what shall I say ?—hasty or vehement, aye, even bitter, and easily annoyed, then remember what I have told you to-day, because I am softened, and cannot conceal it."

"The truest friend must let respect take the place of that confidence which ought not to be intruded upon," said Stanloff, kissing in agitation the hand of the noble woman. "No word, whether prompted by the holiest love or by the deepest sympathy, shall attempt to solve that which is not freely told to me. I am proud, noble lady, to be able to say, that I never have misunderstood you ; but I have often been able to understand you, when you could not do so yourself."

"I know it, I know it," said the duchess, in tears ; "but go now, good Stanloff : I cannot allow myself any longer to give way to my feelings before you."

The doctor left the room, after bowing respectfully. There were slumbering ideas awakened within him, and he thought that the worthy Mistress Morton, who had guided Lady Bristol in her childhood, protected her amidst the dissipations of the court, attended her

at her marriage, and had never left since her side, could in a great measure enlighten him respecting the lady, who often suffered fearfully. This apparent bodily weakness was only the effect of the mental suffering which her proud mind would not allow any one to see, and she therefore carefully shunned all the efforts of her physician.

As the doctor passed through the gallery which led to the rooms of his patient, he remembered the striking effect produced upon the duchess by the circumstances under which she had been found. This event had aroused her from the torpor occasioned by her grief for her husband's death; and he could not help thinking that some hidden emotion, suddenly called forth, had caused her change of mood. He saw that her grief had been tinged with coldness; but, now that her heart was apparently touched by sympathy, it had returned to its usual state. Thus meditating, he had not heard the rustle of a dress in the gallery, and Mistress Morton stood before him without his being conscious of her presence.

"Do you come from the duchess, Doctor Stanloff?" said she. "Am I to take your gloomy brow as the index of her state of health?"

"By no means," answered he; "our lady is very well. When nature permits tears to mourners, then has she preserved them from any violent outbreak."

"And she weeps rarely," said Morton, sighing; "so may God grant her healing tears. I have news for you, doctor: our patient is remarkably changed since her bath, and since she was bled. She has raised her hand; she breathes perceptibly, and she seems inclined to sleep. I think she will—live."

"Live!" exclaimed Stanloff; "and my worthy friend pronounces this word, which crowns our efforts with success, in so joyless a tone, that it seems as if a human life were, in her opinion, of no value."

Mistress Morton cast down her eyes, and silently played with her glove, as if confused. Then she said slowly, with an agitated voice, "Do not interpret my words wrongly. God sees into my trembling heart. I know he will understand me better than I, in my con-

fusion, can express myself. I saved the life of this creature, without thinking of anything but the commands of God; but, now that this duty is fulfilled, the one that is nearest my heart has resumed its unlimited sway. I am old: I have seen much, and heard and lived through much; and thence comes an intelligence of things, as yet dark and hidden, which in youth we call foreboding—shall I call it experience? Doctor," added she, as if seized with sudden uneasiness, "what if we should be fanning the embers which will light this house in flames?"

"Even then," said Stanloff, after a moment's astonishment, during which he looked earnestly at her, and pressed her arm, "would there be no doubt in my mind of our having done right. Those who do their duty, may leave the issue to God."

"Amen, said Morton; "you speak truly, and I am consoled. Now go to that sleeping angel, for I never saw anything so beautiful, and but once any one like her."

She then hastened to the apartments of her mistress. The doctor shook his head, and proceeded to his patient.

The old duchess had promised her daughter-in-law that she would remain at Godway Castle until the return of her grandson from London. Her presence gave joy to all, and her motherly eye rested with pleasure upon those around her whom she had known in her earlier life. Ever ready to give succour to all who required it, she was a rich source of consolation and advice; and being honoured in the highest degree by her children, her promise to intercede with them for any one, was regarded as highly as if the favour had been already granted. But her goodness had in it nothing of weakness, confusing right and wrong from mere pity. Her perception was stronger than that of most people, and the peculiar gentleness and patience with which she listened to others, encouraged the most timid minds to unfold their secret thoughts; so that she thus frequently discovered what others had in vain sought for. She was herself conscious of this influence; her children and grandchildren admired her valuable power; and she would often playfully allude to it, as if it were only worthy of a jest. She would then look round smiling, and, allowing them to cover her

hand with kisses, would say, "You will remember your grandmother, and sometimes wish her back with you." Ah! there was not one who did not feel the truth of this remark, nor one who would not have gladly rejected the idea, had it been possible, that they must some time think of her as dead.

One evening she was sitting in one of the Prince of Wales's rooms, which was dedicated to her use. The scarlet tapestry and curtains of the apartment were rendered even more brilliant by the sun which shone in at the windows. These windows opened upon a balcony, from which there was a beautiful view of the valley, with its meadows and farm-houses; and the noble lady sat enjoying the lovely prospect before her. She was alone, but expecting a visit from her daughter-in-law and her grandchildren, and seats were placed in a circle ready for them. The late sorrow had rendered her delicate features somewhat paler and more transparent; but she felt for her beloved ones, in their late loss, more than she did for herself. Her face, though she was in her eightieth year, retained its noble and regular beauty of feature; her hair, smooth, and white as silver, lay in abundance around her lofty forehead; her eyebrows were brown, very narrow, and beautifully arched; her eyes were of the deepest blue; and the charms which had once rendered her so conspicuous had not disappeared, but merely changed to goodness and gentleness of expression. The smile upon her lips indicated a mind wholly devoted to benevolence; and this endued her with a power of attraction which made those near her sigh for the like peace in their own bosoms. The quiet around her, and the splendour of the room, accorded well with her noble appearance; and the light movements of her attendants, Mistress Cottington, and her old chamberlain, proved that they did not wish to disturb the reverie of their noble mistress.

But she was not selfish enough to remain long absorbed by her own feelings. She heard the slight rustling of her servants, and turning her head over the back of her chair, and smiling at Mistress Cottington, she said jestingly—"And if you broke anything, or let it fall, do you think that I should be so foolish as to be frightened? Come here, dear Cottington, and see how beautiful this landscape

is. It strengthens my old eyes: the beautiful green, and the warm air, so fresh, and scented by the young blossoms, how lovely it all is."

Cottington had approached, and was enjoying the view, which the duchess pointed out to her.

"Do you see," continued the lady, "that nest among the branches of the birch tree, which is nearest the balcony? I have been watching those little creatures: how joyfully and carefully they build. Their little house is not yet ready for them: one brought with great glee a piece of down in his beak, and had much trouble to find a place for it. Lovelace," said she to the old chamberlain, "do not be so careful of your bread: spare me a few crumbs for my birds, for they will want something to eat after their work; they will not find any food, and therefore will be obliged to go to rest hungry. When my grandchild Lucy comes," added she, taking some crumbs from the silver waiter, which the old man presented to her, "she shall strew these on the edge of the balcony, where their sharp little eyes will soon perceive them, and whence they can easily obtain them."

Thus busied, she was surprised by her daughter-in-law and her grandchildren; and before she could rise to receive them, they held her fast in her chair. Her playful struggles for freedom were soon turned into caresses, and she embraced all as if a long time had elapsed since they had separated after dinner.

"Come, my dear child," said she to the duchess, "you shall sit so as to have the same view as myself. Lovelace, remove my chair a little, and now bring that one here. And how are you, my love?" added she; for the younger duchess had taken a stool and seated herself at her feet, so that her head leaned on the arm of the old lady's chair.

She raised her head, and looked gratefully at her mother-in-law; but her tears flowed, and she hid her face in the hands stretched towards her.

"Dear child, strengthen thy heart," said the agitated mother. "To know that those whom we love are happy, is a richer enjoyment than that of sharing with them an imperfect earthly lot."

"Yes, indeed—yes, indeed!" sighed the duchess, with the tone of conviction; "but I hardly know whether these are tears of sorrow which you see: your kind reception, your angelic mildness, overcame the harshness which you know is in me," added she, looking tremblingly at her beloved mother. "I weep, I think, from a desire to become like you."

"Now thou drest, my dear treasure," answered the old lady smiling; "thou wilt turn the head of thy declining old mother with man's worst enemy—pride." And she stroked with her soft hands the forehead and cheeks of her daughter-in-law, and tried her tears with her own handkerchief.

The noble nature of the duchess was never so completely called forth as when she was in the company of her mother-in-law. She had so early lost her own parent, that she did not, until after her marriage, know the happiness of being loved with maternal affection. When the elder duchess had returned from Spain, with her husband and Lord Archibald, the two families lived together until the death of the duke, when his widow retired to Burton-Hall, which he had designed as her future abode. What was most striking in the character of the duchess was a hardness in sentiment, judgment, and words, a harsh, virtuous firmness, which she imposed upon herself, and which she required from others, coldly omitting what might have softened such requisitions. A mind, energetic and capable of deep passion, lay hid beneath her cold demeanour; and spoiled, from her youth upwards, by having been allowed the unbounded exercise of her own will, at the slightest opposition she displayed a vehemence, which, though only temporary, was often hurtful in its consequences. Nevertheless, her natural disposition was amiable, and upright, her heart was noble and pure, and her clear eye denoted great depth of intellect. She was constantly dissatisfied with herself; but diverted from reflection by external circumstances, she allowed her faults to ripen, until they became a part of herself, and only caused a few sorrowful thoughts and feelings, desiring something better, which her mind, having so long been spoiled, was unable to attain. She had acquired but few friends, her affections being limited to those with whom natural circum-

stances had surrounded her; and it was the sweetest consolation of her heart, that she had won the friendship of her mother-in-law, a woman so perfectly contrasted to herself, and who was never alarmed by her faults. In her presence, therefore, she released herself from the stiff bearing which she maintained towards others, and yielded herself up to love and softer feelings.

No one had ever been able to discover the duchess's opinion of her daughter-in-law. She loved her as her own child, and never appeared to perceive her faults. She sought occasionally to repair them; but it was difficult to say whether it arose from really feeling them, or from the mere pleasure of doing good. The young duchess appreciated this forbearance, which never wounded her pride, because it seemed to proceed from the tenderest affection, and on this account she felt deep gratitude towards her.

To-day, the mother did not wish to increase the softer feelings of her daughter-in-law. Returning to her usual manner, she rose from her chair, and, in order to give her time to recover herself, she politely greeted all who had entered the room. The two governesses of the young ladies were there, with Mistress Morton, and Master Copley, the castle chaplain; but the lady missed Doctor Stanloff, and upon inquiring where he was, Copley answered, that he had begged his absence to be excused, as he had business which detained him. All took their seats round the old lady. The duchess sat at her right hand; Arabella, her eldest daughter, a beautiful girl in the bloom of youth, on the left; and next her the ladies, who, being of good rank and education, were esteemed worthy to join the family circle.

Lucy, the youngest and favourite grandchild of the elder duchess, sat on a little stool, at the feet of her grandmother, with that quiet complacent manner which children have when they know that they are fondly loved. Her beautiful curly head rested on her hands, and she looked with widely-opened eyes at the landscape before her, now coloured by the setting sun. It was a beautiful sight to see the blooming child, in her little black frock, her luxuriant blond curls only confined by a black riband, sunk in deep abstraction, her face having that expression of quiet thought which children

have only when in sleep, and which reminds us of the impression of higher and more important things, which later years entirely removes. All eyes were fixed upon her, and those present exchanged glances of delight. The old lady would not disturb her, and therefore withheld her caresses until she should awake from her reverie.

Meanwhile Lovelace brought the silver kettle, which hung suspended over a pan of coals, and setting it in the centre of the circle, arranged the table, placing upon it various silver plates and cups.

With that amiable cheerfulness, which gave pleasure to all around her, the old lady turned to the duchess, saying, "You see, my dear child, that my old lover still remains true to me. Frederic of Nassau still furnishes my table with his favourite Chinese beverage; and I am heartily grateful to him, for there seems to me nothing so well fitted to refresh and invigorate our bodies as these aromatic leaves. As soon as I hear the sound of the kettle, I seat myself comfortably, and feel that my old friend could not have found a more agreeable manner of assuring me of his sentiments."

"It is a pity, dear mother," said the duchess, "that we have nothing in England with which we can supply any of the amiable duke's wants; for it is the active Dutch sailors who bring the produce of other countries to us. Where is now the spirit which Elizabeth roused among our navigators, and which enabled Sir Hugh Willoughby to find the way to the land where these wholesome leaves grow? Who, now that Sir Walter Raleigh is gone, will seek for gold mines for us? Who, so courageously as he, will sail through the deceitful waters, which he crossed more easily than many do the green meadow plain?"

"Very true," sighed the old lady, whilst an expression of sorrow flitted across her face: it was a greeting of love, which she sent to the beheaded friend of her dear husband. "Peace be to his memory!" continued she: "Raleigh lost sight of the aim which had guided his glorious youth, as if his eye had become overcast. What might he not have been to his country! Yet the crime for which his head fell, has perhaps, with many others, obtained pardon there above."

The duchess felt that she had touched a sorrowful chord in the old lady's heart, and she sought, by various questions, to divert her thoughts from the subject.—“Was it not,” she said, “at the time of King James's accession to the throne, that this beverage first became known to you? I think I have heard you say so.”

“It had then been known some time in England,” replied the lady, “but principally among the rich merchants, who could procure the produce of foreign climes more easily than the higher classes. Queen Elizabeth never liked it, and therefore it was never drank at court. At the time you mention, in consequence of the presence of all the foreign ambassadors, Whitehall was the scene of the most brilliant festivities, as also of the gravest transactions; and I caught cold at a ball given by the king. It was a cold, wet, and gloomy summer, and the next day I felt weak and ill. Frederic of Nassau, with whom I was conversing, in the queen's presence, guessed that I was ill, and mentioned to me his favourite drink, which he termed a delightful preventive against the feverish colds produced by the damp foggy atmosphere of Holland, as well as of England. My husband and the Lord Rosny joined us; and the latter teasing Frederic about this beverage, which he found so wholesome and agreeable, my husband proposed to make a general trial of it at our house. As the court rested (as it was called) every day, the gentlemen assembled that evening in my room. Frederic of Nassau; John Olden-Barnevelt, the noble and virtuous martyr to his high-minded principles; the Marquis Rosny, afterwards the famous Duke of Sully; Aremberg, the ambassador from the Archduke Albert; Taxis, the Spaniard; my husband, my brother Cecil, and some other lords of the court, all assembled, constituting a distinguished circle. Deep gravity alternated with the merriest jests, and the charms of the highest mental cultivation, joined with the grace of the most polished manners, prevailed among them.

“Barnevelt was the soul of the business, for the preparation of the tea was laid upon him. His stout Dutch footman brought in a table, with all the necessary appendages, which had been carried there from the prince's residence, to the great delight of Rosny. Barnevelt and Frederic conversed with gravity on the quantity

of leaves to be used, and excited our merriment by their feigned seriousness. The whipped cream, the butter without salt, the wheaten bread, and the spiced cakes, were all properly prepared, and nothing was wanting. The end of all this was, that we found the beverage delicious, that my rheumatic fever vanished, and Frederic presented me with a beautiful ebony box, filled with these costly leaves. My husband then gave me a silver tea-service, made according to Barnevelt's directions; and he also presented my old friend Frederic with a service richly gilt, and far surpassing mine in beauty. So you see the prince still carries on his tea-gallantry towards me. My good Lovelace knows how to prepare this drink, and acknowledges no superior in it. Did you not learn of Barnevelt himself?"

"The chamberlain of his highness Barnevelt instructed me," answered Lovelace, bowing respectfully, and smiling with pleasure at the commendations of his mistress.

"Well, he understands it. But Lovelace is angry if I do not appear by the time the leaves have unrolled themselves in the first infusion, and, as I enjoy it much, I am always ready. To-day, my good Cottington has, I fear, made your steward angry, for she begged him to procure permission from the head-cook to allow her to make some wheaten bread and some sugar-cakes, which she will offer to you; and we must find some means of assuring the good people below that we are not ungrateful for the delicious pasties which they have heaped upon my table, but which do not suit an old lady. See, my darling," added she, turning towards Lucy, and placing the silver waiter with the crumbs upon her knee—"see, my dear, what I have saved for you to-day."

The little girl, who had been attracted by the savour of the spiced cakes, and who was now eating one, turned round to her grandmother, to listen to her gentle words.

"See, my child. Look at that birch: do you see a little nest?"

"Oh, grandmamma," cried the delighted girl; "and there is a little head too! Yes, two. Oh, grandmamma, let them be caught. Good Lovelace, do catch those little birds."

"Not yet, Lucy: they would die. But you shall do something

better : you shall feed them, so that they may not die of hunger. Take these bread crumbs ; strew them on the edge of the balcony ; and they will soon come after you are gone, and carry the food to their nests."

" Give me some, dear grandmamma," cried the child ; and skipping lightly out, she went on tip-toe to the edge of the balcony, half stooping, and strewing the crumbs, like the figures of angels, which we see in old pictures, strewing the entrance to heaven with flowers.

Then seized with a new idea, she turned round, and letting the plate fall, she laid her arms on her grandmamma's knee, and said, earnestly looking at her, " Do little birds die of hunger ?"

" Sometimes, my darling ; although God takes care of all his creatures, and also instructs men so that they can find food for themselves. Yet many little birds die in those seasons when nature has but little to offer for their subsistence."

Lucy was silent for a moment ; then she asked, " But dogs do not die of hunger ?"

The grandmother looked at the sorrowful face of the child, and would have changed the subject ; but Lucy exclaimed vehemently, while large tears rolled down her face,—“ But Gaston will never die of hunger ?”

" No," replied the old lady, soothingly, " we will always feed him."

But Lucy's questions were not yet concluded, for she said imploringly, as if something of great importance depended on her grandmother's answer—

" But men, dear grandmamma—do they ever die of hunger ?"

All were touched by this question ; and after a pause the old lady answered, as she kissed the forehead of her favourite—" Not a hair of our head can be hurt without God's permission. He is near to all who trust in him."

She then turned gently from her grandchild, in order to put a stop to the conversation, and her eye fell upon her daughter-in-law, who, with a kind of shudder, turned aside from Stanloff, who was approaching to greet the ladies ; while she exclaimed, in a tone

betraying fearful anxiety, "What news do you bring, Stanloff? Is she dead? Has this poor helpless lady died of hunger?"

The doctor was about to reply, when Lucy threw herself into her mother's arms, crying sorrowfully, "Oh, mother, mother, is any one really dying of hunger?"

All were agitated. Stanloff repeated several times that the lady was alive, and that she would not die; but Lucy's imagination was roused by fear, and the duchess felt that her own excitement had been the cause of her child's alarm.

Master Copley was the first who succeeded in appeasing her. She raised her head from her mother's bosom, and gave Copley her hand, raising her large tearful eyes to his face; then she left the duchess's knee, and went with her dear old master to the balcony, in order to see if the birds had eaten the crumbs. At last, weary with crying, she took leave of all with a graceful little curtsey, and was led to her room by Miss Deddington, her governess. But as she passed Lovelace, she begged for a piece of wheaten bread, in order to feed Gaston, so that she might herself see that he had enough to eat.

After Lucy had disappeared, the ladies returned to the subject of Stanloff's communication.

"Since last night," said the good doctor, "she has remained in a state of slumber. I tried to make her swallow some broth, and some strengthening drops. I was certain that she would wake to-day, for her sleep was more calm, and she breathed more freely. In order that I might not leave her for a moment, I deprived myself of the pleasure of being here, and just an hour ago she opened her eyes."

An exclamation of joy interrupted the good doctor.

"Her eye," he continued, "glanced first at the bed curtains, and then at that part of the room which was visible; she moved her lips, but weakness appeared to prevent her utterance. Anticipating that she would suffer from thirst, I had prepared a cooling drink, with which Alice approached her. She looked unmeaningly at her for some time; but after Alice had repeatedly inquired whether she would drink, she understood the question, and stretched

out her hands for the beverage. Alas! the violence with which she drank confirmed my first supposition—”

“That she had suffered from hunger and thirst,” cried the duchess.

“Yes,” said Stanloff, “I must think so. After she had ceased drinking, she said, ‘Am I ill? Why am I not in my own bed? and why not in my own room? I do not know you, good woman. Where is Hannah?’—‘You have been ill,’ said Alice; ‘be quite quiet—lie down.’—‘I am very weary,’ answered the lady, scarcely audibly, and again fell asleep.”

“And now,” said the old lady, “are you easy about her? Do you expect her recovery?”

“I hope for it. She is young, and her health is not much affected. It appears as if her sorrows had completely conquered her strength of mind; and this, in young persons, often so depresses the physical powers as to produce insensibility.”

The little circle remained some time longer together, and then betook themselves, through the suite of rooms, to the chapel, where the servants had already assembled, in order to join in Master Copley’s customary evening prayer. The old lady, on the conclusion of this ceremony, preferred retiring to her own room; and the little party separated, to pass the remainder of the evening in their own apartments.

CHAPTER V.

A few days after these events, the ladies were assembled in the rooms of the young duchess, busied in the choice of silks for the unfinished carpet which the Lady Arabella and the other ladies were working, whilst Lucy threaded the needles for them. The duchess also ought to have been similarly employed, but her portion of the work lay forgotten, as it were, upon her knee, whilst her eye was fixed upon the clear flame of the fire, which had to-day become

requisite, because spring had begun its old tricks, and wrapped itself up in fogs and cold winds. The tea hour had passed: Lovelace was relieved from his important duties; and Mrs. Cottington assisted the old lady near the fire, with her favourite employment of pulling silk.

At last the young duchess said to Mrs. Morton, "How comes it that you have said nothing about our young guest? I hope that we shall soon be able to make her acquaintance."

"That cannot be," said Mrs. Morton, more quickly than was her custom. "The young lady has only to-day left her bed, and it would be impossible for her to come hither."

"Well, well," said the easily irritated duchess, "we shall know how to remain satisfied: we are past the vehement curiosity of youth. As soon as the young lady, as you call her, is ready to receive us, we will not delay exercising our accustomed hospitality towards this involuntary guest, and pay a visit to her room. We are also in uncertainty respecting the situation of this young lady. I do not know whether you are aware," said she, turning to the old lady, "that she now talks, and sheds a great many tears?"

"I have been thus informed by Mrs. Cottington, who took turn with Mrs. Morton in her room," replied the old lady. "We must rejoice in the returning signs of life and feeling; though her tears confirm our suspicions that this young life has passed through many sorrows."

A tender glance from her eyes met the quick look of the young duchess, reaching, as usual, the beautiful kernel of her strong heart.

Lucy, who watched with indescribable curiosity for all intelligence of the young unknown, laid aside her work, and stepping to her mother, said imploringly, "Are you going to see her? Take me with you. I wish so to tell her what you said to me, that she shall never die of hunger. Then, certainly she will not cry any more."

"We will soon assure her of it," said the duchess; "but I hope she does not any longer fear it. Dear Lucy, you shall see her as soon as her health allows it; meantime, be quite easy, for Morton takes care of her; and does she let you suffer from hunger?"

Lucy quietly resumed her employment ; and the duchess, turning to Mrs. Cottington, said, " You, dear Cottington, were present at the first conversation with the doctor : will you tell us what passed, worthy of remark ? What appears to be her character, her education, and the rank to which she belongs ? Morton seems decided about this ; but give us your opinion ? "

" So far as I can judge, she must have had a distinguished education," replied Mrs. Cottington, quietly ; " but her expressions are unconnected, on account of the great grief which she appears to feel. Her first returning thoughts were astonishment at the strange room, at the furniture, and servants. ' Why has not my dear aunt left me in my own beautiful green room ? ' she exclaimed. Then she begged that Hannah might be called ; and then, soon forgetting both, she remained quiet. When Stanloff first approached her couch, she looked wildly at him, and throwing herself into my arms, begged me to protect her from this man. The alarm appeared to strengthen her recollection, for she listened to my words attentively' saying, as if she would thus make it clear to herself, ' A good old man, and the physician who has saved my life.' She then ventured to look at Stanloff, and his white hair seemed to appease her ; for with a motion of her hand she summoned him nearer to her, and said, ' Pardon my alarm ; I cannot understand what has happened to me ! ,

" Stanloff now thought it best to assist her memory ; and requesting her to lie down, he told her that he would relate all he knew. He even appeared to me to wish to excite her, for he said abruptly — ' You are not among your own friends : you were found, apparently dead, in the park of the Duchess of Nottingham, and have since been in a state of torpor. You have been waited upon by the women of the duchess, and I am her physician.' I must confess that I admired Stanloff's courage in disclosing to her, so briefly and roughly, the frightful truth. He must have had his professional reasons for this course, and thus kept up his courage ; for I never saw an expression of astonishment and grief increasing every moment in such a degree. She raised herself with violence, whilst a

glowing colour covered her pale face. Her forehead was contracted; her eyes flashed, fixing themselves on Stanloff; then raising her arms, she pressed her folded hands against her brow. I was nearly overcome: my knees trembled; and I was angry with Stanloff, for I feared that distraction would be the consequence of this agitation. Yet in the same moment, and so quickly that it nearly prevented Stanloff's last word, she exclaimed, 'Yes; I know all now! She is dead—Hannah is burnt—Gersem is killed! I, even I, fled with Gersem, till the frightful man seized me—then—(here her thoughts appeared to wander)—I fled away! Ah, how far was the way! But my dear, dear aunt!' Her tears now flowed in hot streams; and it is easily perceptible that it is the death of her aunt which thus troubles her. Mrs. Morton then took my place, and she will tell you further."

"I found her weeping in the bed," began Mrs. Morton, at a sign from her mistress; "yet she was gentle, and her recollection clear. I spoke to her, saying, in a low voice, 'Dear lady!' She replied, 'I thank you for your kind words, but let me only weep. Why should I not do so? Hitherto I have had no time allowed me to lament what I can never cease to mourn. You know not how much I have lost in her. I know it myself, and cannot forbear thinking of it. Dear lady,' said she to me, as she looked closely at me, 'why are you in mourning?' I replied that every one in our castle was in mourning, and inquired why she was? I asked this purposely, and it diverted her grief; for she wept for you, madam; she often repeated your name, and said she did not understand her destiny. 'But perhaps Hannah will come and look for me,' she continued; 'perhaps I shall find protection elsewhere.' She sighed heavily, and, as if overcome by her helplessness, exclaimed, 'Ah, Elizabeth, if thou hadst seen thy dear Mary thus!'

"Elizabeth!" cried the duchess, writhing as if a poisoned arrow had struck her.

"This, I believe, is the name of her aunt; but I may be mistaken," said Morton, somewhat confused,

"I know not why you should think yourself mistaken," said the duchess firmly: "does not this name sound from the throne to the

lowest of the people? Is it not well known, often heard, and never to be forgotten?"

The painful feeling which the strange manner of the duchess created was at this moment interrupted by Otway, who opened the doors leading into the hall where the family dined in unfavourable weather. Sir Edward Ramsey appeared, and announced that dinner was ready. Upon hearing this, the duchess laid aside her work, approached her stepmother, and conducted her to the hall. Here they received the homage of Ramsey, while they dipped their fingers in the water which he poured into the basin, and which Otway afterwards took from his hands. Sir Edward, having then conducted the two ladies to their seats, stationed himself at the end of the table, to carve and to taste the viands.

The company were silent and gloomy. The duchess maintained her quiet bearing, but did not offer to converse with those around her. The attendant ladies did not venture to change the tone of the company; and Arabella, being easily influenced by the superiority of others, felt it now in the presence of her mother.

Lucy and her grandmother were the only individuals who showed any animation. The former carried on a lively intercourse with all around her. She talked, jested, and teased alternately, never waiting for answers; and as she was the favourite of the whole household, and an angel of goodness and cheerfulness, the eyes of all rested upon her, and not the slightest question remained unanswered. She assailed Ramsey unceasingly, and the bold young man amused himself with the fire of her childish wit. At last he began to tease her about her favourite Gaston, telling her that he would be kept in the dog-kennel till the following day, and have only bread and water, because he had failed in his duty.

"Gaston!" cried Lucy, whose face was quite flushed—"Gaston in the kennel! You dare not do it," added she, raising her little hand angrily. "And I tell you he shall not stay there, unless either you or I go there with him."

At these last words the charming smile again lighted her face, and she said—"May I ask the strict man, who has no right to meddle with Gaston, what he has done?"

"He has left his post, and wanders about in the rooms, for which he has been frequently punished by the whip, his place being in the entrance-hall."

"And whence I will take him with me," cried Lucy, "whither your mightiness has no right to command. Instead of staying in the dog-kennel, Gaston shall sleep in my bed to-night, and I will lie on the outside."

All the servants present smiled; and Mistress Deddington exclaimed, "Lucy, Lucy, my angel, you are too lively!"

But the little pet looked slyly at the face of her grandmother, and as she did not appear angry, she became bolder, and bowing her charming head to her mother, said roguishly, "Will you, dear mother, permit Gaston to sleep in my bed to-night, and me on the outside?"

The duchess withdrew her eye from the escutcheons on the opposite wall, on which her attention appeared to have been fixed: it fell, as if refreshed, upon Lucy's face, whilst the child repeated her question. But her usual coldness immediately returned, and she said gravely—"How silly and unbecoming is your request, Lucy. I should never have expected such a proposition from you."

Her glance wandered past the abashed child, down the table, and encountered Ramsey's smiling countenance.—"I fear that you, Sir Edward, with your jests, have enticed this child to make this unbecoming request?"

Ramsey was about to answer, for he was never willingly silent when he knew what to say; but Lucy called out vehemently,

"No, dear mother, do not scold Ramsey: he did not tell me to do it; he is quite innocent. I wished it myself, because Gaston will be shut close in the dark kennel."

At these words tears filled the beautiful eyes of the warm-hearted child; and Ramsey would have willingly apologized, at her feet for his banterings.

The duchess also appeared moved at this, for she said in a milder tone—"Let us hear what Gaston has done. Perhaps we can remedy the matter."

"I must crave forgiveness," said Ramsey, who seeing Lucy's

noble-mindedness, felt himself touched by the same feeling. "I have certainly ventured to tease Lady Lucy by recounting to her Gaston's ill-behaviour. He has, in truth, done nothing, except remained for a long time out of my sight."

"Oh, you naughty Ramsey!" cried Lucy, laughing with joy, and no longer thinking of her grief, to which a clear tear, rolling over her glowing cheeks, bore witness—"thus to calumniate the poor animal. I will remember it!"

The duchess did not feel inclined to follow up the affair; but she inquired where Gaston was.

"In the room of the stranger lady," answered Ramsey.

The face of the duchess instantly changed; and turning to Mistress Morton, who looked down upon her plate, she said—"How does that happen? To whom is he attached in that room? I have heard nothing of it till this moment."

"Your pardon, my lady," said Mistress Morton, without raising her eyes, and whilst a slight blush covered her face; "I did not think the circumstance worth mentioning."

The look of the duchess was fixed on Mistress Morton as she spoke, and she appeared to keep silence with difficulty. Taking advantage of the conclusion of the repast, she conducted the old lady, with the usual forms, to the apartments where they were accustomed to separate after meals.

CHAPTER VI.

The next morning Stanloff paid a visit to his mistress. On entering her apartment, he perceived that her features bore an expression of exhaustion and sorrow. She appeared to have been writing, and it did not escape the doctor's penetrating eye, that there were many sheets of manuscript lying on the table, which stood in the recess of the window behind her. She was now resting

herself by the fire; and Stanloff observed with sorrow the lines of grief upon her face, and the weary eye, which was scarcely raised at his approach. She avoided answering his various questions concerning her own health; and requesting him to take a seat near her, she listened with an inclination of her head to his announcement, that he had been absent a great part of the preceding day, upon a portion of the estate which lay at some little distance. He then said,

“My news of the invalid is, to-day, very pleasing.” He would have continued; but the word which he last pronounced, was echoed in a hollow tone by the duchess. He was silent, for he saw that she wished to speak. She drew herself up, and her usual bearing succeeding to the relaxation which she had till now displayed, she said, in a tone between grief and displeasure—

“My good doctor, this stranger occupies the time and thoughts of all too much. It seems thence to have arisen, that the feeling of sorrow, which ought to pervade all in this castle for the death of their master, my dear husband, has been quite forgotten, through the attention which this new object has attracted. I feel the duties here laid upon me somewhat urgent, and shall therefore rejoice extremely when she can return to her own relations.”

She was silent; but the expression of Stanloff's countenance told her that she had vexed his noble mind.

“But my gloomy words interrupted your relation,” continued she. “It is foolish to expect oneself to be understood, when feelings, which should produce the highest degree of happiness, are converted into a grief which none can share or comprehend.”

These words did not succeed in conciliating the worthy man, as she intended they should do.

“You are right, my lady,” said he, firmly, “if you believe those feelings unshared, which belong not to you. Your powerful mind must see, that nothing can prove so fully our respect for the memory of him, whom my heart will love and honour until it ceases to beat, as a cheerful and honourable fulfilment of duties, in the performance of which he was to us a shining example. When you see the sympathy which misfortune excites felt by those around you.

then remember that the influence of his exalted virtues is still felt; and, still more, reflect that the coldness of the words you have just uttered, is opposed to the example which you have laid before us."

He rose from his seat, and was about to leave the room, when the duchess exclaimed with bitterness—

"Do you, Stanloff, misuse my boundless confidence, in order to annoy me? It becomes you but little to reproach me, when I have allowed you to see more deeply into my heart than any one else."

"Therefore, with the deepest feeling of your goodness, I ventured to find fault with words which are foreign to your noble mind," answered Stanloff with energy. "Who can honour you more than I do? Who has oftener testified his respect than I? I defend the exalted image of your virtues, and am only angry at words which have not their source in that image. Yet I was wrong; for I might have known, that such words from you would never have passed into deeds."

"Enough, Stanloff, and perhaps more than I deserve," answered the duchess, in a mild tone. "I will now listen patiently to your relation."

Stanloff silently reseated himself, and continued.

"Mistress Morton has informed me that your grace is already acquainted with my first conversation with my patient. The agitation which I caused in her, I thought necessary to rouse her from the state of lethargy into which she had fallen. I was not mistaken: the action of the mind often restores the strength of the body, when all other help is in vain. She has since become quite alive to all her unhappiness, but is also aware of her bodily and mental strength, and I think a stronger understanding has arisen from her previous distraction. Her great bodily weakness, and the grief which she feels for the death of a beloved aunt, still retain her in a state of mental confusion. But one can already perceive that she has a delicate discrimination of what is right and fitting; and her manner and words show that she is accustomed to fill a place in the higher ranks. She thanked me in a pleasing and feeling manner for our care of her; but though she is kind and friendly to Morton and Cottington, she never seems to forget for a moment the difference

between their situation and her own. She keeps us at a distance from her ; not by pride or by words, but by the manner which she naturally possesses, and which appears to belong to her mind as well as to her exterior circumstances. I ventured to ask some explanation of the cause which had brought her here. She looked at me a moment, and then said, kindly, ' Pardon me, if I do not grant this request. You gave me the hope of soon seeing my deliverer and benefactress, and to her belong those communications, upon which my future fate must depend. To her I must give my confidence, and leave her to deal with me as she pleases. I have not much to tell ; I could soon relate all my history to you, and to every one ; and I only beg of you to procure for me, as soon as possible, an audience with your lady, at whose feet I long to express my thanks.'

Here Stanloff paused. The eye of the duchess was fixed on the carpet at her feet, and, as she did not answer, he continued :

" I have promised her that I will beg you to see her to-day."

The lady was still silent ; and after waiting some moments, the doctor again resumed.

" I must now inform you," said he, " of an extraordinary occurrence : it concerns Gaston."

The duchess trembled perceptibly.

" Gaston accompanied the women when they bore the lady from the park to the rooms destined for her, and pressed through them in order to be close to the litter. When we were attempting to restore life, I tried to put him out of the room, but he would not go beyond the threshold. After I had succeeded in removing him from his post, he gave a low melancholy howl, and ran forward quickly to the next room, but afterwards slowly returned to his place. When the patient had been laid on the bed, the door being opened for a moment, he slipped in, and, springing towards her, licked her hands, and pressed his head against them, as if he wanted to be caressed. I confess this sight touched me so much, that I did not immediately drive him away, and I heard him sigh almost like a human creature. He remained, day and night, close to the door of the room, until she at last left her bed ; and when he heard her voice, he ran in,

nearly throwing down Alice, who was entering at the moment, and sprang with such violence upon the invalid, that she, alarmed, fell back in a swoon. Gaston was dragged away by force; and since that he has been more quiet, and has remained in his accustomed place."

"And to what does this tend?" demanded the duchess, rising quickly, and casting a glance of proud expectation on the doctor.

"Perhaps," answered that true servant, also rising hastily, "there is some connexion between the lady and Gaston, which the latter has recognised, and which may lead to a discovery of her relations."

The duchess turned angrily away from him, and approaching the writing table, said coldly, "I am not learned in such matters, and must give up trying to understand things which lie beyond the bounds of that reason which God has given me. I will not trouble you with my simplicity in such a weighty affair; but I must beg that this may not be mentioned, among the uneducated people in the castle, as coming from me, or those immediately around me. Nothing is more infectious than mystery, and nothing more dangerous for the lower classes."

"You have only to command, in so far as concerns me," said Stanloff; "but to withdraw attention from the fact, lies neither in my duty nor in my power."

The duchess remained standing at her writing-table, pale and trembling; and Stanloff's heart melted at the sight of her wo, although he had before blamed her for her harsh words.

"Have you received from Mistres Morton the jewels which she wore, and the little pocket-book?" asked he, with the generous wish of arousing her from her present condition, of which he vainly sought the cause in Gaston's conduct.

She answered, with stifled voice, "Yes, indeed, Stanloff; and they are jewels not unworthy to shine in the diadem of a king—a bracelet and a cross. The book," added she, almost inaudibly, "was fastened with a pearl of great value; and inside was a cheque for a thousand pounds, and a paper, with a few lines on it."

"Good God! what is the matter with you?" exclaimed Stanloff; for the duchess groaned as she uttered these last words, and reeled against the pillar of the bay-window.

"Nothing—nothing, Stanloff," murmured she: "but call Morton; and, by your duty to me, by your virtuous soul, yes, even by the regard which you have for my peace, use all your efforts to recover this lady. I will see her to-day."

Stanloff bowed without speaking, and went to call Morton, who met him in the anteroom.

"She wants you," said Stanloff; and the two faithful servants looked sorrowfully at each other.

He put his handkerchief to his eyes, and Morton saw that the old man was much discomposed. She stretched out her hand to him, and said gently,

"Do what is right, and leave the rest to God."

He nodded, and hastily left the room.

Mistress Morton found her lady pale and wearied, yet composed. She had so long been accustomed to see her thus agitated, that she preferred leaving her to herself, quite satisfied that the proud woman would the sooner regain her composure.

In Morton's mind lay concealed a certain pride in the strength of soul and dignified bearing of her mistress, which reconciled her to many of her faults. It therefore annoyed her to see these changes, from softness to vehement and visible grief, so often intruding upon that dignity which she had so well preserved; and she expressed her disapprobation, even at the price of being repulsed. The good old woman certainly well knew how to humour the duchess's state of mind; for the lady always felt at ease with her, and became more composed in her presence.

To-day, she allowed herself to be pleased by Morton's little attentions, and she took without opposition some refreshing drops, offered as if undesignedly. Her chair was placed comfortably opposite to the soft glow of the fire; her feet were laid upon a cushion; and Morton placed some books, work, and various little implements on the table by her side; well knowing that the eyes of her mistress followed her movements, marking whether every

thing was in its place ; and at last, she succeeded in restoring her to something like repose.

Morton now took her work, and was seating herself in her accustomed place, when the duchess, turning towards her, said, in a soft voice—

“Your talent for arrangement is always ready when required. I must beg you to give me your company when we go to visit the sick stranger.”

“I rejoice that you give me such a pleasant command,” answered Morton, approaching the chair in which her mistress was reclining with all the appearance of weariness.

The duchess raised her head, and continued:—“It is needful that you should arrange my head-dress, for I suppose I have not been careful to save it from harm ; and as we are going to make the acquaintanceship of a stranger, we will not show ourselves in disorder. Yet stay, Morton : let me see if I can stand. Yes,” added she, while in her noblest manner she took a few steps forward—“yes, that will do ;” and the smile which, while she spoke, had struggled with grief on her lips, broke forth beautifully for a moment, as, endeavouring to assume a cheerful tone, she said, “I shall be able to go up and down stairs as quickly as Pons. Go, Morton, and call the boy : he shall announce my visit to my daughters, and afterwards to the stranger.

As she took the glove which Morton presented to her, her hand fell suddenly ; and seizing the arm of the chair, she looked with an indescribable expression towards the ceiling. At this moment, Pons, drawing aside the curtain which divided the spacious room, showed his merry young face, into which he threw a playful expression of respect, while he bowed his head, which was ornamented with a cap and feathers, to the ground. The duchess was herself again.

“Now, Pons,” she said kindly, “are you merry ? or, like most pages, too sleepy and stupid to carry the fan and veil of your lady ?”

Pons, instead of answering, looked up at his mistress, thus refuting her expressed suspicion ; for whatever of roguery and

merriment might enter into the brain of a page, shone from his jet-black eyes.

"So," said the lady, smiling, "your profound bow was intended to conceal the merriment which now looks up at me."

"He is never sleepy or dull when his lady honours him with her commands," whispered Pons.

"Child," said the duchess, taking Morton's arm, "you speak as if you had read John Spencer's *Page Lexicon*, a famous book, teaching page-duties under Henry VIII."

Pons, in his elegant costume of the family colours, flew, like a variegated bird, through the lofty rooms and galleries, to announce the approach of his mistress to the servants who attended in the ante-room of the young ladies, and the duchess was received by them with respectful joy. Both were busied with their ladies in the society of Master Copley, who, for some morning hours, conducted the scientific part of the young ladies' education. He was an extremely amiable and respectable old man; as a clergyman, of the most liberal opinions; of good scientific attainments; unmarried; and attached with his whole heart to the family whom he had served as chaplain since the death of the former duke.

The duchess had to-day an agreeable, gentle manner towards all. She knew how to give a kind look and word to all; for she was in her best mood, amiable, yet dignified, as became her rank and character. She knew how to make every one agreeable to himself, and thus healed the little wounds which she too often tore open. Yet Mistress Morton felt that there was a slight struggle to defer the object of her visit. She was absent, looking earnestly around her. At length she rose, but, still delaying, she stepped to the high bay-window that looked into the park. Her eye appeared to watch the sun breaking through the heavy clouds, and streaking slowly the verdant glades of the park. As Mistress Morton looked over the shoulder of Copley, with whom she was conversing, she observed that the expression of the lady's countenance quickly changed, announcing nothing good: but it passed off. Courageously she turned from the window, and lovingly approached her daughters, whom she

locked in her embrace, and looked long and tenderly in their eyes. Then kissing each, she said gently—

“My beloved children, let us never forget your dear father. Always think of his virtues, and live like him: then shall we all be able to bear what God lays upon us.”

Thus speaking, she withdrew her arms from the deeply-affected children, greeted pleasantly the rest of the party, and leaving the room with a firm step, proceeded, without taking Morton's arm, along the gallery, that terminated in a hall, in which were two doors; the one, the entrance to the apartments of the Prince of Wales, containing the suite of rooms belonging to the old lady; and the other, on the opposite side, leading to the rooms opening upon the castle-court, in which the stranger was lodged, and which the duchess was now about to visit. Pons had already returned to the duchess, after having announced her arrival; but she did not appear to notice him, as she stepped into the open rooms.

Scarcely had she entered the first, when, at the doorway of the third, appeared a female figure, who, when she saw the duchess, hastened forward, so that the two ladies met in the second room. Each regarded the other for a moment: then the stranger, bowing her head, fell at the feet of the duchess; who at the same instant, and feebly, as if dying, called Morton, whose arm she tremblingly seized. Thus she stood, incapable of moving or speaking, while her eyes were fixed upon the person kneeling at her feet.

“Oh, my protectress!” cried the stranger; and these words were uttered in so soft a voice, that they must have touched any heart.

But the duchess trembled as if these tones tore her soul in pieces. However, this was the last sign of self-forgetfulness: her recollection returned, and she looked with shame and confusion at the unhappy being who lay at her feet.

“My lady! what are you doing?” cried she quickly. “Arise. We kneel before the benevolent Protector only who brought you here, where we will endeavour to repair your injury.”

Then first the stranger raised her eyes towards the duchess, displaying a face bathed in tears, and bearing the gentle expression of a grateful smile, which animated her countenance, notwithstanding

its lily paleness, with the exciting magic of womanly beauty. With the assistance of the duchess, she raised herself from the ground, and stood before her with a graceful dignified bearing. But when the duchess led her to a seat, it seemed even to the zealous Morton, as if the latter were inferior to her in beauty, and that this young stranger united in herself all that could be called most lovely.

"Stanloff has given me permission to see you," said the duchess, seating herself, "to inquire whether you have had all you required, and whether I can serve you."

"Oh, my lady!" cried the stranger, pressing her delicate hands to her breast, "do not ask me whether it has gone well with me since I have been in this castle: I have been under the care of the noblest of women."

At these words, she cast a glance towards Mrs. Morton, which appeared to speak the warm gratitude of a noble heart, and was so expressive that the lady was quite touched, and felt more humbled in her presence than afterwards, in her own room, she could well understand; and more than the duchess had ever previously seen in this old and proud woman.

"You also, my lady," continued the stranger, "have come to a poor orphan girl, in order to sanction the protection that I have enjoyed. I thank you for the kindness of your manner, and if you will permit me to open my heart to you, I shall learn from you, better than from myself, how my fate is to be decided."

"Leave that for the present, my dear child," said the duchess; and laying her hand on her shoulder, she added—"I do not come here to remind you of your misfortunes. If I consent to your being agitated, I shall deserve Doctor Stanloff's reproaches. Remain silent concerning your name and your circumstances as long as you please: you are assured of my protection; and I require no assurance beyond what I have before me, for upon your brow are stamped both high birth and innocence."

It could not have escaped the excited attention of Mistress Morton, that the duchess shared the belief of all those who had previously approached the young lady, and which was excited by her person and manner. The duchess felt that she had given way too

easily to the impression made upon her by the stranger. She deemed it improper that her feelings should ever outstep her reason; perhaps, because she knew that the latter was not always to be depended upon; and her displeasure was rising, when these momentary ideas were interrupted by the words—

“Birth and innocence!” which the young lady repeated with an expression of astonishment not to be mistaken. Some new idea, which she could not follow up, appeared to take possession of her mind, and a flush of thought crossed her expressive countenance.

But the duchess, who never wished to remark or to divine the feelings of others, for she was accustomed to set bounds to her own before the world, did not appear to notice the effect which her words produced on the stranger; but said, in a pleasing tone, while she rose from her seat—

“I hope that I may now, without exciting you too much, prepare means for your amusement. My daughters and their ladies shall assist in relieving your loneliness, until you are so far recovered as to be able to join our family circle. Farewell, lady; control your mind, that your body may become strong.”

“Oh, do not leave me yet!” cried the stranger, as if awaking from a dream, and placing herself before the duchess. “Tell me, noble lady, that you will still protect me. Can any one reach me here? Are these rooms quite safe? Pardon me, dear Mistress Morton? You have often answered me the same questions, yet I long for the consoling assurance from your lady’s lips. Oh! be not angry with me, lady. I was formerly called fearless: they were deceived who said so; for there was no room for fear in my happy life; but I have lately learned to know what it is.”

“Do not be uneasy,” answered the duchess; “your repose shall never be interrupted. I will answer for your safety. In the bosom of your own friends you will not be more secure than here.”

“God reward such great kindness,” said the affectionate creature, while an expression of thankfulness and respect beamed in her face. She bowed her head, and crossed her hands upon her bosom, the shining brown hair shading her high forehead and her lovely face.

She raised her eyes slowly to the duchess, and whoever saw this look would have devoted themselves to her for ever. The lady was again agitated, and her eye remained fixed upon her, as if she could not remove it, whilst her feet were in the act of walking away. The colour on her cheeks changed, and she stammered, almost inaudibly, a few farewell words. She hastened to the next room, and stood still before Pons, who, bowing, inquired her commands. She saw him not, and his words did not reach her ears: her eyes were fixed gloomily on the end of the hall, as if she there descried some object. Pons raised his head, surprised at her silence, and perhaps expecting a continuation of some former jest. But so striking was the expression on the face of the duchess, that he sprang back, and looked inquiringly at the spot on which her eye was fixed.

Just at this moment Morton entered, and her voice was heard by the lady.

“What do you require, Morton? What have I done? What do you say?” cried she hastily.

“Pons is waiting your grace’s commands,” replied Morton, in a firm voice.

The duchess passed her hand over her forehead, and then pointed to the door which led to her mother-in-law’s room. Pons disappeared like lightning; but his mistress remained behind to collect herself, until the old lady, apprised of her approach, sent Lovelace to the door to receive her. She even came herself to meet her, but her friendly mien and words died away when she saw the duchess more nearly. She was of a deathlike paleness; her eyes were dim, her lips trembling too violently for words, and her hand could only make a slight sign towards the doors. These being closed at her signal, with her last strength she seized a chair, and sank into it deprived of consciousness.

“Do not call any one, my lady,” cried Morton, “and do not shriek: it will soon be over, and I have all that is required for her restoration.”

And the faithful servant loosened her girdle and headband, and rubbed her forehead and temples with reviving drops, whilst the old

lady, calm and collected, tried with motherly tenderness to warm her daughter's hands in her own.

"Has she seen the stranger?"

"Yes, just now."

These were the only words exchanged between them. Their quiet endeavours were soon rewarded with success. The duchess opened her eyes: composing herself, she looked round, and perceiving what had happened, she endeavoured to rise. She would have spoken, but the old lady would not permit her. Leading her to the fire, and seating herself quietly by her side, she said,

"Must I again reprove you? How can you thus risk your health? You have been in those halls and galleries without your cloak, and the air is to-day so foggy that no windows can defend us from it. You forget how much more delicate your health now is than it used to be. We will punish you because you bring suffering upon yourself; or, if you will obey your old mother in future, we will not betray you, for your children would really have a right to scold you."

The duchess cast down her eyes, which had remained fixed upon the speaker during this address, as if she would seek its true meaning. But although she could not decide whether her mother-in-law really did attribute her swoon to the fog in the galleries, she could not mistake the artless expression of kindness in her features and in the tone of her voice. The fearful gravity upon her pale face gave way to resignation, as it had often done before when in the presence of so warm a heart as that of her mother-in-law, and gently lifting her hand to her lips, she said mildly—

"You have not given me up, my truly good mother: people only scold those whom they hope will improve. I will willingly obey you. Had I always done so, I should perhaps have been more like you. Ah! I am weaker than I have ever been; I am strange, even to myself, and cannot collect my thoughts. What a frail thing is that which we term strength, simply because we can bear what overcomes others; and what a vain illusion is courage, which exists only because we are spared that which will subdue us, and which,

when it does arrive, gives us a view of our minds from which we cannot turn without self-reproach. It reminds us that we have much within us that we have hitherto neglected to summon to our aid, because we so proudly believed that we possessed what we called strength."

"Where is the human breast, my dear daughter," replied the old lady, "which can boast of having gone through life without shrinking? We do not cease to be strong, when we are agitated by what God gives us for the fortifying of that strength, which, in time, becomes part of us. It has often struck me, that we interpret strength as something different to what God intended; and you, my child, seem nearer to true courage when in grief. Strength is not hardness of feeling. You are not weak, because you feel deeply what God's hand lays upon you: in that grief lies the strength which you fancied had disappeared, because it no longer arms you against Him. That does not appear to me to be strength, which deadens the feelings of grief and joy; but that man appears to me mentally powerful, who feels and answers the full purpose of his being. The power of joy and grief over him must be restrained by his reason, and quarrel and opposition must not move him. He will always reckon himself among the strong; for if you step into life richly gifted, you strive to conquer, and being allured by it, at length feel yourself overcome. The struggle for the prize of freedom is that which lies before all strong souls, and the conqueror must have been the struggler. Whatever quickens you—call it peace, call it patience—is so difficult to attain, that even the strong one cannot reckon it his own till late."

"Patience, mother? It is thus that you designate that lamblike feeling which nature bestows at their birth upon the most careless of beings? Do you deem that synonymous with strength, for these appear to me as the poles of human nature? Is not patience the want of strength? Will he who feels courage to fight, in life, for that which appears to him right—will he, instead of doing what his powers require from him, stand by, an idle witness, and simply receive that which has been determined on by others?"

"Who that lives has not learned, dear daughter, that there are

limits to the success of courage? In youth, we think life a lovely mystery, of which we wish only a happy solution; later, we meet with opposition, in which we delight, because it arouses our strength to bestow the warm and delightful feelings which we receive. Whoever was created strong-minded, he dreams that life lies in his bold hand; and beyond himself he sees ardent hopes, from which he seeks great things. Hardly is the point attained where he would begin, when what he would acquire lies in ruins within his reach: then the moment arrives when the best asks himself, whether he has deceived the world, or the world him? The strong mind lives through this moment, and that which then gains the ascendancy confirms his earlier promise. The mysterious between—to will, and to succeed—is revealed to him; and his firm mind now acknowledges the limits which were placed from without to his rash steps. Driven back into himself, he collects the treasures which so temptingly decoy him; and whatever presses upon him afresh from without, will tend to assist him towards what is good. In this manner comes to the strong one, and to him alone, that great word which I named to you—call it peace, or call it patience.”

“Oh, how little I deserve your holy word, dear mother! How scornfully have I overlooked this feeling, which your words present to me as the holy rays which stream from the foreheads of martyrs!”

“And who, my daughter, gives us a higher interpretation of these words, than such patterns of the most exalted strength and virtue? Did earthly success reward them on their way? Were they not likened by the Highest to the sower, who, ere the harvest was yet come, was snatched away from the field which, in troubled times, he had bedewed with his own blood, thus nourishing the young germ? Was the patience with which martyrs suffered, and the high soaring of their souls—was this not strength?”

“Yes, dear mother; but never before has the application of this to our short life been so clear to me. I now feel as if I must declare to every one the impression which has to-day been made upon me; that none may any longer fancy himself strong, when he is merely angry with life for having chided his vain aspirations, and for

having prepared for him a path not consonant with the proud dreams which he has himself created."

"It is the weak man, dear child, who unceasingly strives after the phantom of his vanity, consuming itself in discontented feeling, and striving to impute to the individual what its own weakness produced. But let me here pause. Have not your sorrows too long chained you to this uncomfortable seat?"

"Think not so, dear mother: an angel led my weak steps to you. Your presence is at all times a balm to my heart; and to-day your words have comforted me, you know not how much, and just at the right time."

"Praised be God!" said the old lady, kissing the forehead of the duchess. "We must ever listen with sympathy and gratitude, when God calls us to do good to those whom he loves."

CHAPTER VII.

When the ladies met at dinner, the duchess informed her mother-in-law that she had received letters from Lord Archibald and her son, who were in London, and that they might expect her brother-in-law and the young duke in a few days. She then begged that her daughters, attended by Mistresses Deddington and Carby, would pay a visit that afternoon to the strange lady. On hearing this, Lucy clapped her hands with delight, and it was the first merry meal they had enjoyed for some time; for the prospect of a visit from these two gentlemen appeared to act cheeringly on the different inmates, according to their various circumstances.

Lucy's pleasure knew no bounds. The strange lady, her brother, her uncle, all excited her naturally lively temper; and Ramsey, Pons, Otway, Jephson, and others among her favourites, all afforded her a source of amusement. But suddenly she exclaimed—

"Mamma, you have not told us the strange lady's name. How shall we call her?"

"I did not ask her, my child; for it is not becoming to weary one who is under my protection with questions of that kind."

"But why did she not tell you her name?" asked Lucy.

"I did not wish her to speak of what would agitate her, especially as Doctor Stanloff desired she should be spared."

Lucy was about to inquire why telling her name should agitate her; but the duchess, after some words with her mother in an under tone, rose quickly, saying that she did not wish to be disturbed during the dessert—an intimation that the two ladies desired to be alone.

When the duchess had led her mother to a seat by the fire in her room, she took out the letters which she had received; and, with that respectful attention which, in spite of her modest bearing, was paid to the old lady as the head of the family, informed her that Lord Archibald had given her some intelligence respecting the treaty of marriage, which, before the death of her husband, had been made between her eldest son and the Lady Anna Dorset. They had become acquainted with one another in London, before the duke's journey to Spain, and had appeared pleased with each other. The two fathers had been much gratified on finding that their wishes were likely to be fulfilled; and the Earl of Dorset had now received the young duke with distinguished attention, and had repeated to the Earl of Salisbury and to Lord Archibald the promises he had formerly made.

"My son, however," continued the duchess, "finds it inconvenient at the present moment to carry on his suit; and although he has appeared in the duke's family circle, and speaks with admiration of the young lady, yet it is his intention to procure a release from his duty at court, and then he will return to us. Lord Archibald will accompany him, in order to assist him in the duties awaiting him here; but he has been obliged to consent to leave my son Richmond for some weeks with the Earl of Salisbury, who, in his present uneasiness, wishes for the support of some one who is devoted to him, and who can be relied on. Here are the two letters."

"I can truly congratulate you," answered the old duchess, "on

the prospect of a union, which, according to my knowledge of the Dorset family, promises much comfort. The earl has, I think, a younger daughter, named Olonia; and with such a mother, I am sure that both must be well brought up. Anna is considerably older than her sister; and they will be the richest heiresses in London."

"Read this, dear mother," said the duchess smiling, and giving her Lord Archibald's letter, "and you will see what your son says of Olonia. I cannot keep from you the secret with which he has entrusted me. You will see that he thinks this young lady, who has completely fascinated him, the most brilliant match in London, after her sister, the Lady Anna; and that she appears to him as if made for Richmond. But the greatest secrecy is necessary, for he has often expressed a dislike to marriages brought about by others; and the idea of this would prevent his ever thinking of her."

"Such was my own idea," replied the old lady; "but that which is the best for us, happens without our interference. I much rejoice that Katherine Dorset, the mother of these girls, and who has been a friend of mine from childhood, promised, just before the late sorrowful news arrived, to introduce her daughters to me. I will do nothing openly to further our views; but when I return in the summer to Burton Hall, I will remind her of her promise."

The conversation was here interrupted, and the ladies separated.

On the evening of the same day, after the duchess had withdrawn to her room, and her attendants had quitted her, she turned to Mistress Morton, who always remained with her until she had settled to rest; and laying her hand on her lips, she said in a low voice,

"Go, Morton, and see whether all is quiet—whether the passage"—she hesitated, and laid her hand upon her heart, as if she felt some great pain—"whether the passage," continued she, with trembling voice, "is clear and undisturbed, which leads past these rooms to the Italian wing. Yes, Morton, you hear correctly. Do not be alarmed: I am firmly and irrevocably determined," she added; for Morton drew back, and expressed an astonishment almost amounting to disobedience. "Silence, I beg of you. I would not willingly be angry at this moment, and least of all with

you; and yet I would, even with severity, exact the service which I to-day require of you."

Mistress Morton knew her mistress too well not to believe the truth of these words; but her faithful heart was strongly opposed to the lady's intention, and she could not easily reconcile herself to it.

"It is in your grace's power to command my obedience," answered the worthy woman, casting her troubled eyes upon the ground, "and now for the first time, during the many long years that I have served you, do I feel this power with pain; for I fear that you require my obedience in that which is opposed to your own welfare.

"Enough! enough! Do not make that which is difficult even more so," cried the duchess, without displeasure, but with deep grief. "Be quiet: do not add to the agitation of my heart, by the fear of causing pain. Go, go! Do what I command you. It must be so: it will do me good. Therefore do not make me talk any more, but go at once."

Morton felt that all opposition would be in vain, but her face changed with the expression of her anxious mind. The duchess turned away with a sigh, as, without replying, she took a candle, and left the room. With painful forebodings she examined whether the castle was quiet; and after she had ascertained that profound stillness reigned throughout, she returned with a heavy heart to her lady's apartment. She found this empty, but the door which led to the choir of the chapel was open, and denoted whither the duchess had betaken herself, to ease her overladen heart. Full of respect, and composed by the remembrance of this highest consolation, Morton folded her trembling hands, and the fervent prayer of her faithful heart was one so entirely unselfish as is rarely offered before God's throne. Her thoughts were nevertheless abstracted by the words which penetrated her ear from the chapel, and which appeared to be the conclusion of a prayer, uttered in a strong imploring voice:—

"O, Lord, bless the weak purpose of my heart. Help me to exercise gentleness, and animate this cold breast with the spirit of

thy goodness. Thou seest into the depths of my soul, and knowest the thoughts that are there, even before they are my own. Before thee falls the armour of pride and of vanity, with which we seek to secure our conscience. Quicken me, then, and give me strength to fulfil thy will. Let not that happen, which I in my earthly weakness desire; but that which thou willest, teach me to do, and let thy good spirit lead me in the right path."

All was silent, and soon afterwards the duchess appeared in the doorway; and when her eye fell on Morton, who stood with her hands clasped, and her head sunk on her breast, she approached, saying, in a firm voice, "Amen!"

"Amen!" gently responded the faithful woman. Their eyes met, and the wall of separation between mistress and servant melted away in the pious feelings with which both were filled.

Reclining for a moment on the breast of her truly faithful attendant, who merged her own wishes in love to her mistress, the lady submitted quietly to her efforts to protect her from the cold of the gallery, and even consented to take the contents of a small bottle, which were at times necessary for her, without making any observation.

Morton having taken the lamp, they left the room. The moon lighted the gallery through the large bay-window; but the rays of the flickering lamp were insufficient to penetrate the wide space. They met with no obstruction in the room, which for many long years had been so seldom trodden; and having reached the northern turret, they stopped before the door which led to the Italian wing.

The duchess gave Mistress Morton the key, which she had carried under her cloak, without raising her eyes, and the door was opened. The spacious hall lay before them, differing so greatly from the room through which they had passed, and which had been built to contain those works of art from which this portion of the castle derived its name.

These rooms had never been opened since the departure of the late duke for Spain. The duchess retained the key in her own possession, and had hitherto refused every one permission to visit them. Who could have imagined that she would have been the first

to enter this place, and that at an hour in which her mind and feelings were more than usually sensitive to painful recollections. The solemnity of the moment appeared to affect her powerfully: she paused on the threshold, as if overcome; whilst her eye, in fearful grief, glanced through the space, which, lighted by the pale moonshine, admitted by uncoloured windows, presented so striking a contrast to the dark galleries she had quitted, that it seemed to her as if the abode of a glorified spirit, illumined by a heavenly light, lay before her.

The magic of beauty gave elasticity to her mind, and she stepped into the hall, diverted for a moment from the remembrance of her sorrow. Morton followed, gently shaking her head. The duchess's intention of visiting, at this hour, her beloved husband's apartments, appeared to her so completely to overstep the bounds of that reason and moderation which she was accustomed to see in her benefactress, that she was constrained to acknowledge that she could not understand what was passing in her mind. There appeared a tension, or rather an extravagance in her manner, for which the old lady could find no parallel in the former actions of the duchess, and she was obliged to confess, with a sad foreboding, that she must have been actuated by some secret motive.

She had but little time to indulge these reflections, whilst she followed her mistress into the duke's apartments. Suddenly surrounded by well-known objects, which gave indications of a busy and intellectual life, and which, in undisturbed order, appeared to be awaiting her husband's coming, the unhappy wife, overwhelmed by a flood of tears, sank into the chair, standing before a table covered with books and maps, in which he had so often sat.

What a succession of thoughts passed through her depressed heart in this holy room, which was last trodden by his foot, and which was still filled by his breath. The frightful everlasting separation, which had filled all with sorrow, here appeared to her to be a lie. She raised her head, and looked around her: the illusion borrowed colouring from the objects which she beheld. "He must come," thought she; "here, he cannot fail me."

"Come!" cried she, in a hollow voice: "leave me not alone!"

She lay upon her knees, but raised her head, and turning it over her shoulder, cast a longing glance to the bedroom, the entrance to which was concealed by a thick curtain. It was fearful to behold her stretching forth her hand, as if she expected to grasp his.

Morton's knees trembled, and her whole frame shuddered. She was free from the weakness, so common at that period, of believing in apparitions; but she had loved the noble duke, and the recollections which these rooms awakened, opened her grief afresh. She understood her mistress's sufferings, and had too much respect to disturb her by attempting to offer consolation.

But she could not reflect on the end of such deep and consuming sorrow, without fear and apprehension. She looked at the duchess: the expression of her face was softened, and her tearful eye was animated by sorrowful tenderness. Her silent expectation was vain: the curtain did not move; a deep sigh only met her ear, and she rose from the ground. She advanced a few steps, and stood by the side of her trembling attendant, whom she had quite forgotten, and from whom proceeded the sigh which had aroused her lady from her reverie in the world of spirits.

The short dream in which she had indulged being now ended, the real truth returned yet more painfully to her memory; for a yearning was awakened in her mind, and the irretrievable necessity of bearing her existence without him whom she loved, struck in its full force upon this passionate and untamed spirit. Weeping bitterly, she sank upon a chair; and her heart in vain tried to attain patience and resignation. Her feelings were now quite at variance with those which had led to her prayer in the chapel; and what now reached God out of her erring heart, found, we hope, grace before that Judge who looks down with compassion on the sorrows of his earthly creatures.

Morton regarded her agitation long and silently, till the last call of the watch from the tower announced that it was past midnight. Her courage, which had been entirely depressed by this nocturnal visit, and which had been overwhelmed by dread of its consequences on the mind of her mistress, returned when she saw her tears. Approaching her, she gently requested her to return, and not to

risk her health any longer in these rooms. The duchess withdrew her cold hands from her face at this unwelcome warning, and a frown appeared on her forehead, as she replied :

“ I give you leave to turn back, since this holy place appears to you so full of dangers. I can do what I want without you ; in fact, better than I shall do if any cold admonitions interrupt my holy feelings. Leave me : I will take care of you, as you do of me. Go, then, since you wish it, for thus I interpret your words.”

“ Oh ! I pity you for being so unhappy as to mistake me so cruelly,” cried Mistress Morton sorrowfully, but without expressing displeasure ; and her hot tears flowed over the cold hands of the duchess, and touched her with a feeling of repentance. Being now aroused from her grief, she remembered the object of her visit ; and rising slowly, she said, while her tears ceased to flow,

‘ The purpose for which I came here lies beyond your province : therefore your remonstrances weary me more than your good intentions serve me. Be resigned to my will ; in that way you assist me the most. Light this taper, then leave the room, and wait for me in the adjoining hall. I hope,” added she slowly, and breathing with difficulty—“ I hope that I shall soon be able to follow you. If you do not see me in half an hour, come to me ; perhaps I shall require your assistance.”

Mistress Morton lighted a half-consumed wax taper which stood upon the table, and which, in happier days, had illuminated the now gloomy room ; this she gave to the duchess, who, wrapped in her cloak, stood silent and still in the middle of the apartment, and then left her.

The decisive moment was now arrived. “ I am satisfied with myself—I am firm,” was the unuttered expression of her manner and her steps. She turned towards the curtain, drew it hastily aside, and entered the little bedroom. This was in the form of a rotunda, and the only ornament was the beautiful wood carving of the walls. All that was requisite for a sleeping apartment was placed in a recess, separated from the rest of the room by a carved panelling, in which a door was concealed. The duchess found the spring by which this was opened, touched it, and instantly the wall

divided. The dark silk curtains of the bed waved towards her : she pressed her hand to her heart, and stood breathless, until they resumed their stillness.

She saw that she was quite alone : the curtain was not raised, as it used to be, and she shrank back, as if unable to proceed farther ; but collecting all her courage, and placing the taper upon the dressing-table, she clasped her hands, whilst she said in a low voice—

“I repeat it once more, to thee, my husband, I am come to thee—to forgive thee ; for thy honour is holy to me. And all who belonged to thee, shall be acknowledged by me, as if thou hadst requested it. Hear me ! No oath is more inviolable than the resolution which my love has wrung from my pride—to forgive thee. This will reach thee ; and when thy heart, laden with this guilt, appears before the throne of thy Judge, then let thy wife’s forgiveness be the intercession for thine, and thus be peace to thy spirit.”

She became herself again. The victory was gained, and peace to her troubled mind : all her earthly and proud feelings lay crumpled under her feet.

“So be it !” said she, after a pause. She turned round, and approached the opposite wall. A beautiful wreath of flowers was here carved on the panelling, and in the centre of one of the roses was a little golden spring. She touched it : the panel opened, displaying a picture, in a golden frame, of the size of life.

It represented a young lady of angelic beauty, and so lifelike, that the smile on her lips seemed as if going to break into words. In the background of the figure were myrtles and orange-flowers, forming a bower around her, and leaving above her head the pure blue heaven, from which the light streamed upon the wreath of roses, ornamenting the dark shining curls which fell in waves upon her shoulders. Her robe was of the purest white ; while a purple mantle, fastened upon her shoulders with jewels, descended to her feet. She bore in her beautiful hand a fantastically formed staff, resembling partly a cross and partly a sceptre, with lilies and ivy entwined around it.

The picture was a masterpiece of art, and yet whoever looked

at it forgot the merit of the painter. It seemed, to the unprejudiced observer, only a worthy representation of a being on whom nature had lavished her most brilliant gifts, and to whom she had given a soul which sent an angel's greeting out of her eyes.

This enchanting picture was uncovered, but the eyes of the duchess still remained fixed on the ground. At length she raised them, drew herself up, and looked steadfastly upon it. The sight caused her even more bitter grief than she had previously felt, but the magic was so powerful that she could not withdraw her eyes.

"And you have also deceived me!" she exclaimed at last. "Yes, there remains no doubt that there is another like thee. So God be gracious to me! Yet I forgive thee—I forgive thee! Hear me, God, and forgive him also!"

She looked once more at this lovely figure, which in vain smiled upon her grave face. She then recollected herself, and seizing the light, she left the room, hastening through the adjoining apartment, without looking back, as if she feared to lose her strength. She opened the door which led into the hall, and passed Mistress Morton, who followed her trembling.

"You are cold," said she to her: "let us hasten; it is chilly; morning is near, and we have been quite long enough in the cold morning air."

She hastened on, endeavouring to appear composed, and forgetting that the trembling of the light showed how much she was agitated. But this did not escape Mistress Morton's observation, though she did not make any remark upon it, as she knew that the proud lady did not wish that her agitation should be observed. After proceeding some distance, the duchess, not hearing Morton's step, turned round. The attendant displayed her own lamp; and the lady, perceiving her mistake, relaxed her grasp of the taper which she held, and gave it to her. Morton hurried back with the taper, and then followed the duchess through the long gloomy gallery, which no moon now enlightened, and the stillness of which no word interrupted: nothing was heard but the opening and shutting of the doors, and the rustling of the long dresses on the oaken floors.

CHAPTER VIII.

The stranger lady had, meanwhile, a very strong desire to make the duchess acquainted with the particulars of her past life. Her previous interview with this distinguished woman had opened to her that prospect of boundless confidence for which she so ardently longed; while her own high character prevented her from feeling that embarrassment which the duchess so easily created in others, and which prevented the full perception of her superiority.

In the company of the younger ladies of the house, she felt herself diverted from the horror which had seized her, and she gave herself up to the harmless amusements which were carried on amongst them. Her mind was too well-ordered not to wish to be freed from its present confusion: she hoped to be able to see things more clearly, in trying to explain them to others. The expression of the duchess, in referring to her birth and innocence, had destroyed the unconsciousness of youth on these points: it had taught her to apply to herself what she had formerly heard said by others, and which would certainly be sufficient to place these points beyond all doubt. No sooner had she perceived this, than her mind was busily occupied in arranging the history of her early years—a task comparatively easy, as, in tender youth, the most prominent events begin and end with the affectionate intercourse of relations and tutors. This was the first time that she had reflected on her own life. Her memory was refreshed, and the more she pondered, the more strange it appeared to her. Contradictions, and inexplicable things, now struck her, which she was ashamed to meet. Perfect confidence in those around her had hitherto saved her from these reflections; and she felt herself called, whilst very unprepared, to give an account, which her sense of honour made her judge necessary; though at the same time she could not hide from her clear-sighted mind that difficulties and enigmas would arise. The conviction of the necessity of an explanation with the duchess had excited her fear, and at the same time had increased her wish for it; for she thought she should hear

from that experienced lady the solution of what appeared so dark to her. She therefore requested, through Stanloff, a conversation with her benefactress, which entreaty was immediately granted.

The centre hall of the castle, which the rays of a spring sun agreeably enlivened, was fixed upon as the place of interview. The lovely stranger entered, supported by Mistress Morton; and she met the proud look of the duchess, which fell inquiringly upon her, with so quiet and fearless a glance, that the former felt almost abashed before her. The cold pride by which that lady sought to keep others at a distance, had no effect on the extraordinary dignity of this noble-minded being.

The thoughts to which the consciousness of this gave rise in the mind of the duchess, allowed the young lady time to speak; and with the fervour of conscious truth, she expressed herself so affectionately, and yet respectfully, that the relation between the two was changed, and she was on an equality with the haughty woman, before the latter had awakened from her reverie. This change was new, and not perfectly intelligible to the duchess; and uttering a few cold, unmeaning words with a bitter smile, she led the young lady to one of the seats which were placed in the bay-window, in order that she might enjoy the lovely prospect.

There was a short pause, during which Mistress Morton retired, on a signal from the duchess; and the latter, turning round to her guest, fixed upon her a look of deep feeling and anxious expectation. She immediately felt herself in a better frame of mind; and with a soft winning tone, arising from a well-tuned heart, thus proceeded:—

“We have now both time and quiet to make our communications. Yet do not hasten, lady. Let us not be unmindful of the beautiful prospect which is here before us. If I do not mistake, I read in your expressive features a great love for such objects. There is no sweeter balm for a sorrowing mind, than the sight of God’s glorious works; and no friend understands the happy heart so well, or how to exalt its feelings so much, as nature. See, lady, how beautifully the sun enlightens those distant objects. Do you perceive that shining streak, which appears to border the horizon like a silver

girdle? It is the Trent, whose navigable waters bound this county, and the sight of which gives me often-repeated enjoyment; for above all things I like to be near the water. I often, therefore, visit with pleasure Burton Hall, the seat of my dear mother-in-law: it stands just where the Trent falls into the Humber, and appears to me to have all the enchantment of a water-spirit's abode."

"I also am fond of the water," answered the young stranger,

"for I was born, and for the most part brought up, in a castle which my parents inhabited on the shores of the Solway Firth, in the county of Cumberland."

"What, lady?" cried the duchess; "what do you say? In Cumberland? With your parents?"

She paused; for astonishment at these vehement questions appeared in the eyes of her guest. But quickly recollecting herself, and seeking an excuse, she added more gently:

"Pardon me, lady; your fate interests me, and I earnestly wish that the confidence which you desire to place in me may alleviate your anxieties; and yet I fear it will pain you to bestow it."

"You err, my lady, if you mean that word painful to refer to yourself," answered the stranger with softness; "but you are right if you use it in reference to what I have to relate; for I feel as much diffidence as anxiety to tell this to you. My consolation is that you will know it, and my fear is, whether I shall be able to give you a clear idea of my earlier life. Grant me indulgence, as you have granted me pity. I know, my lady, that you will not deny me either; therefore, let me beg of you to hear me, for it does my heart good to be able to look up to you with childlike confidence."

Before the duchess could prevent it, the lady had sank at her feet, pressed her hands to her lips, and crossing her own on her breast, looked up, while love and trust beamed from her tearful eyes. The heart of the duchess was agitated by feelings which she had once wished to cherish, but which she now felt, against her inclination, through the enchantment of an individual, quite the reverse of herself, and by whom she saw herself overcome. From this moment she loved the stranger; and whatever shades might afterwards appear in that love, the present crisis was decisive for both.

"Compose yourself, dear child," said she softly, "my heart feels for you; be open and true to me as to yourself, and think no more of how your story sounds. My age and experience will assist you."

"And I will be true, as before God, who is present, and who will guide all my thoughts," answered the young lady, rising from her knees, and slowly and calmly resuming her seat. Then fixing her eyes on the prospect before her, she began her relation.

"I was born, as I have already told you, my lady, in Cumberland, in my father's castle, Northwick Hall, which, surrounded by gardens, stood on the banks of the beautiful Solway Firth. My father was the Earl of Melville, the descendant of Mary Stuart's favourite, Robert Melville, and my mother was a lady of the house of Mar. My parents left Scotland after the death of my grandfather, who, for some reason unknown to me, commanded them to reside at Northwick Hall, perhaps because it was so beautifully situated, and because it was presented to him by Queen Elizabeth.

"From the earliest time that I can remember, my parents were visited by many people, who partly educated me, and by their affection increased my happiness. First among these, I must place my grandmother, and my aunt, the beloved parent, and sister of my mother. They did not live with us, but they paid us long visits, and I often returned with them to their castle, which was situated far inland. Next to them, I loved my tutor, the chaplain of the house; and my parents placed me under the care of a lady who had formerly lived with my aunt, and who was so kind that she performed every little service for me, and never suffered me to quit her presence.

"After I had passed the first years of childhood, my time was portioned out with carefulness. My parents were themselves highly educated, and as they wished that I should be equally accomplished, my good tutor, Master Brixton, who had been highly distinguished at Oxford, undertook, out of friendship for my father, to instruct me in science and in the dead languages. These delightful occupations

made my life very happy. My mornings were passed in Brixton's little study, where I learned what was wise and beautiful from his careful instructions. At the conclusion of my daily tasks, my father was generally prepared to lead me forth to enjoy the open air, and the spirited horses pawed the ground, and carried us with arrowy swiftness through the beautiful country. I shot the birds as they flew around me, and the black circle in the centre of the target received many arrows from my bow. I ran in the race with the children of the castle, and was skilled in all active exercises. With what pleasure did I perform all this, and how happy did I feel at heart!

"The vicinity of Scotland, and also of the harbour of S——, to our castle, often led strangers to visit us. My appearance was not frequent on these occasions, which would have wasted the time otherwise so well occupied in attention to my studies; yet I joined the fêtes that were occasionally given by my parents, and at which the young people of the neighbourhood assembled to spend a few hours in dancing and other amusements. But the visits of my aunt afforded me greater delight than anything else. Oh, my lady, how excellent was she! I must acknowledge that I seemed to live only for the moment when I should again see her. When wearied with my tasks, I thought of her; and whenever I failed in my duty, the idea of her displeasre was my greatest punishment. Her gentle seriousness led me to moderate the wildness of my spirits, and when she, who was my protecting spirit, arrived, I had no happiness until I had confessed my faults at her feet. Even now I remember what she said on these occasions: that can never be forgotten, for no one ever spoke like her. She said but little, and sometimes my reward or punishment lay in a look, a slight movement of the head, or a smile.

"Oh, pardon me!" said the young lady, bursting into tears; "for, believe me, I know not how I can survive the loss of this object of my affection."

She covered her face; and the duchess, by her silence, evinced her respect for such grief.

"And yet, my lady," continued the stranger, "for her sake I will

five, and bear all that is laid upon me. I will act as if her eye still watched over me. She would be angry with me, if I wished myself away from God's earth, merely because misfortune has come upon me. Had I fallen first, she would have lived in patience and peace before God, and not have murmured at his will. No, no—I will be happy—I will——” But tears choked her utterance, and rendered these efforts to attain peace inexpressibly touching.

The duchess attempted to divert her thoughts from this melancholy subject, by saying, “And how did your mother like your extreme attachment to this aunt? Do you not think that it approached too nearly to that love which, it seems to me, was due to her alone?”

“All was peaceful on this subject, as on all others between these two sisters,” replied the lady. “I never thought about it; and had I failed in attachment to her, or done anything wrong, I am sure they would have told me of it. I did not spend much of my time with my mother: her health was delicate, and I was always kept away from her, except in the evening, when I practised my music in her apartment; but although so little in her presence, I was continually reminded of her by the beneficial regulations which she laid down for me. No, my lady, it is quite clear to me, now that I reflect upon it, that my mother did not feel hurt by my love for my aunt, who was so honoured and respected by all, that my attachment seemed nothing uncommon, and my mother also evinced towards her a love which almost amounted to reverence. My father made her take the first place in the house; and even my grandmother, who died many years ago, seemed to regard her daughter as a being of a higher order: hence, my love was natural, and my suffering mother was not the less affectionate.

“I must now apprise you of two beloved persons, whom I was accustomed to see during my visits to my dear aunt: these were her brother, and a friend, to whom he was much attached. Alas! of all this happy circle, these are the only two now left to me. I still hope to meet them again, for I believe they are in London, in attendance at the king's court. The weeks which they passed with us are the happiest of my recollections. At my aunt's residence, we

led a lonely and retired life; but notwithstanding the quiet, the days passed like hours, and I, happy child, was the centre-point of their love and their instructions. They related to me various stories, and made me acquainted, not only with ancient history, but also with the events of the day. They told me of evil, that I might be able to guard against it; they described to me the difficulties of life, and then questioned me in order to ascertain whether I fully understood what they had imparted, and also whether I could judge between right and wrong. They made trial of my feelings, my knowledge, and my understanding, in various ways; and my uncle often told me, that I was destined, some time or other, to leave this quiet happy life, and to join the dissipations and amusements of the court. They added, that I must there retain the same quietness and composure of manner which I now observed, and regard dignity of character and of action as the most honourable distinctions.

“My dear aunt invariably listened to these precepts with tears, and as I grew older, I found that she had deep and secret sorrows. So great was her piety, that she never murmured, but ever resigned herself to God’s will; often warning me not to regard happiness as necessary—that misfortune was sent to ennoble and strengthen our heart and minds, and that this strength is the end and aim of our present life. My separation from this happy party was always painful to all, and sometimes I remained long after my uncle and his friend had left her, although, at other times, I returned home before their departure.”

“It is now just a year since I received, during one of these happy visits, the intelligence of the loss of my father: he died at Edinburgh, whither my mother immediately repaired, leaving me with my aunt. We were all very melancholy, and my tears flowed bitterly at this my first great sorrow. I was now more in Hannah’s company, for my relations had much to occupy them. At last the news arrived from my mother that she had returned to Northwick. My father’s possessions in Scotland had passed to distant relations; but his English castle, with its beautiful domains, which was an independent gift from Queen Elizabeth, remained in the hands of his widow. My aunt immediately conveyed me thither, for my

mother's health had suffered, and she did not wish me to be absent from her. My situation appeared to cause her much uneasiness; for as Master Brixton had been appointed to a lucrative living in Edinburgh, I was limited to Hannah's companionship.

"I know not why my aunt was obliged to leave me, but her departure seemed to cause her much grief; and from that time I inhabited my mother's apartments, scarcely ever leaving her room. Yet she did not like me to be so much confined, and sent me away from her as often as she could. I was obliged to proceed with my occupations and amusements, but I dared not ride alone in the wide park; and, as I had no playfellows, my chief pleasure was in practising with my bow and arrow in the courtyard. I continued the studies which I had begun with Brixton, especially the dead languages, of which I was very fond. But with the first breath of spring came a frightful epidemic, occasioned by the damp of a long and mild winter, and which desolated the country around us. My grief on this account was augmented by the command never to go beyond the terrace, where the air was deemed purer than elsewhere.

"You may imagine my delight, when my aunt suddenly arrived. As soon as she heard that this fever was raging around us, she resolved, if the strength of my mother would enable her to undertake the journey, to take us away from Northwick; or, if the latter could not be removed, to pass the dreadful time with us. My mother did not wish to go, and the mere idea of leaving her alone was frightful to me. After the first effort to obtain my consent, they pressed me no further, and my dear mother collected all her strength in order to accompany me. Alas! this for ever deprived us of her love: she was led upon the terrace, in order to breathe the air, from which she had been so long excluded; she inhaled the infection with which that air was filled; the same night the fever showed itself, and her weakened frame could not bear up against it. On the third day her spirit fled. Alas! I had not tended her—I had not received her last sigh! My aunt informed me that the sight of me, and her fear lest I also should contract the disease, would kill her; she sent me her last blessing, with an injunction that I should immediately depart. I was in a state of stupefaction.

“ We set out on the following day, for the consequences of this fever were so terrible, that my mother was obliged to be buried the same evening. Yet deep as I was sunk in my grief, I perceived only too soon that a fresh sorrow threatened me. My aunt had taken the infection at her sister's death-bed, and symptoms of the fever showed themselves on the second day of our journey. We reached the castle, but—let me pass over this—you can conceive what I felt. I had seen all else who were dear to me fall a sacrifice to death, and now she also was struck by it. She informed me that it would be necessary to apprise her sister's younger brother of her death. She thought it possible that he would come, but she desired that I should not leave my room during the time. I was to be placed under the protection of my elder uncle, from whom she only desired to hear in order to know that I should be perfectly safe. She had given Hannah and Gersem directions in case this should not occur, and I was to obey them in everything. She tried to moderate my unbounded grief, although her own tears flowed incessantly whilst she was talking to me. Towards the end of our conversation, she became faint, and was carried to her bed, from which she never again arose.

“ I can scarcely remember what happened to me after this. I lay on the floor in the anteroom until her death could no longer be kept secret from me. My consciousness then left me; and when I returned to myself, I saw Hannah sitting by my bed. I could not weep, but I remained quiet in my room. The dreaded younger uncle was arrived, and all endeavoured to conceal from him the knowledge that I was there. A strange unknown feeling—an undefined dread of this man, although I did not know what I had to fear—seized my trembling mind. There was yet no news of my dear uncle and protector, and without this we dared not quit the castle. Gersem was banished from the presence of the new lord, who took possession of everything; passing over the rooms in which I was concealed, only because they were in a small building, added to one side of the old castle.

“ The body of my aunt was arranged according to her own instructions; and Hannah gave me so touching an account of the

beauty, which had not been destroyed by her illness, that I was seized with an irrepressible longing to behold her once more. Hannah remained inexorable, and at last referred me to Gersem, who generally visited me in the evening. He came, and for some time refused to grant my request; more especially as the apartment in which the corpse lay was only to be reached by a gallery adjoining the rooms which my uncle occupied. But as I bewailed my fate with vehemence, and lay at his feet bathed in tears, he at length consented, and, covered with my black veil, at midnight I followed him to the room.

“Hannah locked the doors of the apartments which we quitted, and we succeeded in reaching the hall, of which Gersem had the key. I beheld those features, which had cheered my life, bearing a saintlike expression; I prayed for some time by the corpse, and vowed to fulfil all that she, when living, had required of me. The sight of her had calmed my grief, and I felt myself in full possession of my faculties; when, suddenly, I heard Gersem cry out, and a raging voice struck on my ear. I sprang up from my knees in order to escape; but I felt myself rudely seized, and a glance convinced me that the intruder was my uncle. I cannot repeat what he said. There was mockery and rage around the corpse of my aunt. Despair animated me: I struggled with him; he seized my black veil, and, as my face revealed itself to him, it seemed as if he thought he beheld a spirit. He cried out, and covered his face with his hands: it was now his turn to wish to escape. Suddenly I felt myself carried away by Gersem; but before we had reached the door, my uncle recovered, and again seizing me, he exclaimed, ‘You are, I see, no spirit: you are welcome to me now!’

“He tore me from Gersem. I felt my strength failing, and my senses were nearly gone, when the servants rushed in hastily, and the cry of fire was heard. He relinquished his grasp, and we all hastened to the gallery. The fire advanced nearer to us: it seemed to issue from the rooms where I had left Hannah. I wanted to save her; but Gersem threw my cloak over me, and desiring another servant to hasten to her assistance, he bore me off, through several passages, into the garden.

“ Here he gave me air ; but it was necessary to go yet further, and he ran till he reached a farm-house, on the outside of the park. Here he wrapped me up again, and hid me in a thick hedge, whilst he went to the house, and asked for a couple of horses. As he was known to come from the castle, no one dared to refuse him ; and we mounted the horses at a short distance from the house. Gersem informed me that I must proceed to London, and then gave me a little black book, which I recognised as one that had belonged to my aunt, and which had been in his possession ever since her death. This I concealed, according to his wish, in my bosom.

Fear of my furious uncle overcame every other feeling. I thought of him alone ; yet I desired to reach London, for I knew that there my protector resided. We pursued our journey on the following day, and, to refresh our horses, stopped at a little inn, where an old woman gave us some refreshment : she had but little to offer, but even that I could not take. Gersem meanwhile looked after our fatigued horses ; and it was finally decided that we should remain there during the night. But grief, and the frightful uncertainty of Hannah's fate, effectually banished sleep from my pillow.

“ With the first rays of the morning sun, we again set forth ; but our speed was vain. Before noon we heard the tramp of horses behind us, and Gersem had no doubt they were those of our pursuers. Filled with rage and despair, he spurred on my weary horse, which was incited to a quicker pace by the noise behind us. Yet all our attempts were vain. Threats and curses assailed our ears, the dust enveloped us, and in another moment we were surrounded. The terrible man seized my bridle, attempting to take hold of me. But horror gave me strength : I commanded him not to touch me, and he obeyed ; but he called Gersem a seducer—a traitor. More harsh words followed, and he insisted on knowing who I was.

“ ‘ Whoever she is,’ answered Gersem, is no affair of yours, and I shall not inform you. But do not harm her ; for fearful will be the reckoning you will have to give, and fearful will be your punishment.’

“ These courageous words, instead of alarming, only increased the rage of my pursuer ; and I saw Gersem's face struck just as he had

told me to follow him. To resign myself to the power of my uncle appeared worse than death, and I cried vehemently, 'I will not go with you! I will go to London, where I shall find protection. Let me go on!'

"He laughed so wildly at this exclamation, that I turned away shuddering, and at that moment I felt his arm round me. My cry made Gersem as furious as a lion. He had already seized the frightful man who held me, and who now drew his sword. I only saw that it glistened above Gersem's head: it inflicted a fearful wound, and he fell from his horse. I fainted.

"When my recollection returned, I heard some one near me singing a hymn, and I inhaled the sweet perfume of the first buds of the reeds and the willows which were spread over me. I tried to open my eyes, but I was so weak that I could not do so, until returning recollection of the horrible scene through which I had passed, gave me strength. I found myself in a low room, dimly lighted by a lamp, but more brightened by the moonbeams which penetrated through the window. I was lying on a pallet of straw, with a white cloth spread over me, as over one who is dead. A woman, in the dress of a poor peasant, sat by my side: it was she who had sung the hymn which awoke me, and the words of which were now quite comprehensible to me.

"I heard laughter in a distant part of the house, and I exerted all my strength to rise, but my limbs felt cold and stiff. At this moment the song of my companion was interrupted by the sound of footsteps: the door was pushed open, and a man entered, whom I instantly recognised as my pursuer. I could scarcely suppress a shriek, as he asked the woman whether I had shown any symptoms of life?

"'She is dead,' replied the hostess, whom I now saw was the same old woman who had tended me on the preceding day; 'believe me, her young life has fled.'

"'Silence!' cried he wildly. 'Dead or living, she must travel. To-morrow I set out; and now go and see after my people?'

"He approached my couch, and stooped over me. What a fearful

moment! I suppressed my breathing, but felt uncertain whether even this would save me.

“‘And what is this for?’ he demanded, tearing a branch from my hand: ‘what mean these decorations?’

“‘I strewed her corpse with these first blossoms of spring,’ said the old woman: ‘shall her young body lie there, without the ornaments due to her youth?’

“I concluded that he was angry, for he hastily left the room. I held my breath until I could no longer hear the sound of his footsteps, and then collected all my strength to speak. The good woman, who had really believed me dead, was so much startled by the first word I uttered, that she had nearly betrayed me. In reply to my questions, she informed me that the corpse of Gersem had been taken away on the previous day; but that the gentleman did not believe me dead, and had therefore ordered that I should be left there. I implored her to save me, and at last she consented. She procured me a rope, which I fastened to the window-frame, in order that the old woman might be freed from all blame, as, on perceiving it, my persecutor would conclude that I had escaped from the window during her absence. She then let me out by the door of the cottage, and, though almost unable to walk, I hastened to a wood close by, where I found a boy, whom she had desired to show me the way towards the high road to London. My ideas, at that moment, did not go beyond this road; but I felt my strength increasing, and before the moon went down we had made our way through the wood. It was quite dark by the time we had gained the road, and the boy now left me; for I dared not retain him, lest his absence should betray to my pursuers his mother’s participation in my escape.

“I was now alone—and under what circumstances! But God strengthened my heart. I prayed to him, and my fears were in a great measure appeased: it seemed as if I saw protecting angels around me, and I felt strong in the presence of God. When the morning dawned, I saw that I had not made much progress. I had passed the place where Gersem was killed, and had now arrived at the spot where my progress was interrupted on the preceding day. The road was quite clear, but daylight filled me with new apprehen-

sions. I arranged my clothes in such a manner as to attract no attention ; but, in spite of this, my appearance excited so much astonishment in those whom I met, that I dreaded being exposed to fresh violence. With weariness came the want of nourishment ; but I had no money, and I could not summon courage to ask it at any of the cottages which I passed. I hoped that sleep would restore me, and I sought repose in a thicket behind the hedges. But sleep does not come to those assailed by hunger and thirst : it came not to me, and with horror I felt my remaining strength rapidly decrease. I was not afraid of death ; but God knows that I was obedient to his will, and did not pray for it. My mind became stupefied, and I remember no more than that I was awakened by the coldness of the morning air

“ My clothes were wet with dew, and I felt nearly frozen. The wood appeared to me warmer. I went on, how much further I know not, until I reached this place of refuge. I do not remember the terrace steps, where they tell me I was found ; for all has disappeared from my recollection, and my fall must have occurred through the stupefaction which took the place of my grief.

“ Now, my lady, you know all -that I can tell you ; and I am easier now that you know it, for you can give me your advice ; and my name and rank, as well as my innocence, are now, without a doubt, before your mind.”

Whether the duchess was really satisfied with regard to her name would perhaps have been questioned by those who saw the look which she cast on the lady, as she uttered that one word. It was, however, perfectly clear that she was too deeply agitated by what she had heard, not to give way to softer feelings towards her. She drew the young stranger to her bosom, and, as she led her towards the warm light of the sun, the poor creature seemed to think that no safer or happier resting-place could be found for her, than the breast of her honoured and beloved benefactress.

The duchess mildly promised her protection ; and the lady, gratefully kissing her hand, said,

“ And now, my lady, furnish me with some means of apprising my dear uncle of my fate.”

The duchess was silent for a moment. Then she said, "I do not feel myself equal to give you advice on this subject. I expect my brother-in-law and my son from London in a few days; and if you will permit me to communicate to the former the principal facts of your relation, he will, I doubt not, be able to give us some assistance. He is acquainted with all the nobles of the court, and without doubt knows your uncle, Lord Melville. I hope, however, that you will remain under my protection until your uncle can procure a proper home for you. This, at all events, will be better than for you to seek him."

The lady thanked her, and appeared the more composed in consequence of this new favour.

But it was not so with the duchess. A heavy struggle had now commenced in the breast of this unhappy woman. With a trembling voice, she said, "I have taken possession of some of your property, which I will now restore into your hands."

As she spoke, she took up a little box, in which were the jewels which the Lady Melville had worn, and placing it before her she said, "Will you tell me the meaning of these beautiful gifts? They must surely be keepsakes from some very dear persons."

"You are ill," said Lady Melville, looking at the duchess. "I have wearied you. Allow me to lead you to a seat, and then I will tell you about these beautiful gifts, for they recal dear recollections. Mistress Morton informed me that they were in your safe keeping, for, with the return of my consciousness, I felt great regret for my supposed loss of these jewels, with which I had promised never to part. This book," said she, taking the portfolio, which was fastened with pearls, "does not belong to me. I never saw it, except in the hands of my aunt. Have you examined the contents?" "asked she, as her trembling fingers hesitated to open the lock; "do you think it is meant for me? Has not Gersem mistaken? Do you think I may open it?"

"It is certainly intended for you," replied the duchess, "and it is not empty. I must beg your pardon for not being actuated by the same scruples as yourself. It was brought to me along with those jewels, and I opened it in the hope of finding there your name.

or that of your relations, and thus be able to send them intelligence of you ; but, instead of this, I found two bills for a thousand pounds ; and what added to my astonishment, the address of our house in London, and my late husband's name."

"What?" exclaimed Lady Melville, and the clear blush of joy overspread her countenance: "so then I was sent to you by my dear aunt, who probably knew you or your husband."

"I never knew a Countess of Mar," answered the duchess, "nor did I ever hear her mentioned by my husband. Yet it appears to me that there is some coincidence here, giving me the right to protect you, at least until we have made further inquiries ; for since he to whom you appear to have been sent is no longer among the living, that duty devolves upon me."

"Oh! what a happy turn my miserable fate seems to have taken!" cried Lady Melville; and the transition from grief to joy, so easy in youth, appeared on her face, and animated her mind. "To you I was sent, and I have found you without any effort of my own. God has guided my steps, through danger and death. Say, is not this a proof of his ever-ruling fatherly hand? Yes; here am I, in the right place. God has accomplished that which men planned for me; and if it be good for us all, he will guide me further."

"So we will hope," said the duchess; and feeling herself involuntarily attracted by her inspired features, and giving way to her tenderness, she kissed her, saying, "When my brother-in-law arrives, we will settle this affair as he thinks best."

"Every moment in your presence," said lady Melville, "appears to bring me peace and hope. I feel as if I had nothing to fear if you remain kind to me, and if you will guide my affairs."

The duchess was not insensible to this affectionate appeal; but her attention was so strongly fixed on the necessary inquires, that she dared not long yield to her feelings. She raised the covering which lay over the beautiful jewels, and the sight of the cross which was amongst them at once gave a new turn to Lady Melville's thoughts. Taking up the string of pearls, she pressed it to her lips, saying,

"I received this from my dear parents. Put it on me," added

she, smiling, "that it may be blessed in its return to my possession."

The duchess appeared to obey willingly, for she hung the necklace on her delicate throat, and laid the cross, which was formed of twelve large emeralds, set in diamonds, upon her bosom. Lady Melville then took the bracelet, and said, smiling,

"I love him who gave it to me as my own father. He was the friend and companion of my uncle. I have mentioned him to you; but what is very strange, I never heard of his name; or, if I did, I have quite forgotten it."

"What, my lady, you do not know the name of him whom you loved as your father, with whom you were so often, and who gave you so rich a present? Do you say that you do not know his name?"

"I can tell you no more than what I know," said Lady Melville in a quiet tone; but in the look which she turned upon the duchess lay the expression of wounded pride. "If I further add," continued she, "that I do not know the name of the castle where my aunt resided, nor even in what part of England it is situated, your astonishment will greatly increase. But perhaps you can imagine my surprise, when, in reflecting on the details of my past life, in order to relate them to you, this strange mystery struck me. Yet it increased my desire to tell you my history; for I thought that your experience and knowledge of the world might furnish some explanation on certain points which I cannot make intelligible to others, because I have never before had occasion to reflect or to inquire concerning them. I can more easily understand how it happened that I never heard my dear friend's name, for he was invariably styled either, 'Lord Robert,' or 'my dear friend.' My residence at the castle seldom exceeded a month: my uncle and his friend were always there on my arrival; and the enjoyment of their society was so great, that the exterior world was forgotten by me, and we were never separated except during the hours of sleep. I have told you how we employed ourselves: we inhabited a suite of rooms opening upon a terrace, which looked towards a wood; we enjoyed there the pure air, and listened, without interruption, to

those interesting conversations of which I was the object. On these occasions I often fell asleep at my aunt's knee, and, like a child, was carried by Hannah to my couch, which was placed in my aunt's chamber. Whenever this beloved abode was mentioned at Nothwick-hall, it was always called 'the castle,' sometimes with the addition of 'in the middle of England;' and I was so accustomed to this name, that I never discovered the want of another, until I felt myself called upon to make this communication to you.

"Lord Robert's right to bestow upon me this ornament is easily explained: it was given to him by my parents, who chose him to be my godfather. These diamonds form a cipher, which he promised to explain to me at a future time. He placed it on the cushion at my baptism; and when my arm grew large enough to wear it, he put it on, after having made me promise never to part with it."

With these words she drew back the long sleeve of her black dress: the expression of mildness returned to her face, and she looked imploringly at the duchess, who, with her head supported by her hand, was sunk back motionless in her seat. As Lady Melville stooped to receive her answer to these explanations, she saw that the eyes of the duchess were swimming in tears; and fearing for her, though uncertain why, she knelt before her, saying, gently and tenderly, "Are you ill, or are you angry with me?"

"No, I am not angry with you," replied the duchess, composing herself, and looking earnestly at the beautiful face at her feet; "but I am suffering. Yet forgive me," added she; "I will finish your adornment;" and taking the bracelet, she said solemnly—"A dear, very dear hand first placed this on your arm. I now repeat the act, and promise you to take as much care of you as he would have done, if it had so pleased God's will."

Saying these words, she fastened the bracelet on the lady's beautiful arm, and then rose quickly. The parting moment was arrived, and the Lady Melville awaited the duchess's farewell with quiet grace; but the latter remained with her eyes fixed on the ground, as if unwilling to break the silence, which nevertheless appeared burdensome to her.

At this moment well-known sounds were heard at the entrance of

the hall, and these in some measure relieved her from the embarrassment produced by the thoughts which filled her mind, and to which she did not wish to give utterance.

A joyful bark and noisy scratchings were heard at the partly-opened door, and soon afterwards Gaston rushed in. He was about to bestow his boisterous delight upon the duchess, but she did not appear disposed to encourage him, and endeavouring to moderate his vehemence by a few gentle words, she turned round as if to retire.

Gaston now for the first time perceived the Lady Melville, who, absorbed in deep thought, was looking out on the terrace: hastily approaching the spot where she stood, he fixed his eyes upon her, and then so suddenly sprang towards her, accompanying the movement with a howl of joy, that, startled, she uttered a piercing cry. But her alarm instantly gave place to delight, and stooping to caress him, she said tenderly, "Gaston, dear Gaston!" and she pressed his head to her bosom; whilst he, almost wild with joy, ran round and round her, and both seemed so absorbed by their mutual pleasure, that all else around them was forgotten.

Lady Melville did not perceive that the duchess had, during this scene, convulsively seized hold of a table which stood near her, and that her features were agonized with mental suffering.

"Oh, my lady," said the stranger, "where is he? Gaston was always with him. You have concealed him, and intend to prepare me, through Gaston, to meet him. I am quite composed," added she, quickly. "Oh! permit me to see him, and do not fear any more emotion from me."

Gaston interrupted these words by his repeated caresses, which drew her attention from the duchess, and gave the latter time to recover herself.

"No, my lady; it is not in my power to comply with your wish. I cannot show you the possessor of this dog, and I think you are mistaken in supposing that you have ever known him."

"I mistaken in Gaston? in my dear Gaston!" exclaimed the young lady—"he whom I nursed when he hurt his foot in jumping from my aunt's terrace! Is not this dog's name Gaston? and, see,

here are the wounds—the hair has not yet covered them. Do you not perceive that he knows me?”

And truly did Gaston appear to answer this question, by the various movements with which such animals know how to express their satisfaction. The duchess could not resist the conviction thus afforded; and her mind, unfitted for hypocrisy, could not negative the stranger's questions. Having subdued Gaston's excitement, she took Lady Melville's hand, and leading her on one side, said,

“Tell me, to whom did this dog belong?”

“To my uncle's dear friend: he always accompanied him on his visits. Believe me, I know him well.”

“I never doubted it,” answered the duchess, “but I must make one request. I demand one service of you, in which lies much that concerns me, and which perhaps I may one day explain. Will you promise to grant this request—this urgent petition?”

“Do you doubt my willingness, lady? Tell me what you require? Are you not convinced that I will gladly obey you? What you ask cannot be wrong, and I can truly say that I will fulfil it, not from the obligations under which you have placed me, but from love to you.”

The duchess seized Lady Melville's hands, and pressing them fervently between her own, said, “Never, never, to any human being—by word or by look—betray your acquaintanceship with Gaston.”

“With Gaston?” stammered the stranger, overwhelmed with astonishment. The grave and earnest manner of the duchess had excited her curiosity, and led her to expect some very important request; and now she only asked her to deny her friendship with a dog!

Yet her innate sense of what was due to propriety led her to moderate her surprise at the duchess's conduct, which she felt disposed to blame. She could not help perceiving that this request involved a denial of the truth, if, by any accident, she should be called upon for an explanation; and she felt that no one can be safe, who makes a solemn promise before he knows what will be required of him. This inward strife caused her to remain silent; and her

delay in answering was increased by an uncomfortable feeling towards the duchess, whom she could no longer regard as so judicious and prudent as she had thought her only a moment before.

But the duchess having made her request, Lady Melville's prolonged silence appeared to her as something insulting. Therefore, resuming her accustomed dignity of manner, and looking at her guest somewhat angrily, she said, coldly,

"I asked a service of you, my lady: did you hear me? It is the first favour I have claimed from you. Perhaps I ventured too much, in requesting you to aid me in carrying out a precaution which I intended for your own benefit."

She was about to leave the hall; for her pride once excited, would admit of no restraint. But prompted by the feelings which had led to her request, she turned back, probably expecting to find a suppliant before her. Instead of this, however, she beheld a calm reflecting expression on the face of Lady Melville, who exclaimed,

"I am, as you see, uneasy and in doubt. You must not leave me thus. I confess to you that your request has produced this uneasiness. I promised compliance before I knew what you required; and although my respect for you led me to conceal my astonishment at the incomprehensible nature of this request, I cannot help saying, that I think you have not sufficiently considered the consequences of my compliance. For, tell me, can any one save me from the sin of a lie, which I cannot avoid if I obey your wish?"

"You are very circumspect, notwithstanding your youth," replied the duchess, who was reluctantly compelled to acknowledge the purity of these sentiments. "I cannot blame you, for I also am an enemy to falsehood; yet whilst I feel for you, I can no longer conceal from you that you are the first person who has compelled me to have recourse to evasion. But that is the curse of the wicked," said she, as if speaking to herself, "and nothing can remain untarnished in their presence. As regards my request," added she more audibly, "I will leave it to your own conscience, which shall determine the performance of your promise. I will, however, endeavour to remove all temptation out of your way.

You must adopt the same course, and remember, also, that whilst you are rendering me only a small service, you are probably doing the greatest to those who are dear to you, and whom you call your own."

"I thank you," said the lady, in the full tone of her melodious voice: "you have again set me free, and it does not appear to me difficult to avoid that which you request me to shun. For your sake, I will willingly act prudently and circumspectly. I perceive," added she, gently, "that you have rightly estimated my character. I rejoice that this is the case, and will not, by giving way to any childish curiosity, make that a burden to you, which you wish to hide from me."

"Do not deceive yourself, lady," replied the duchess; "you set too high a value on my penetration. My life has always been free from mystery. My demands have therefore always been received with so much confidence, that those around me have yielded to them without reservation. Let us now separate, for the present. This evening, before we go to prayers in the chapel, I will introduce you to my mother-in-law, the Duchess of Nottingham; meantime I will dispense with your company at table, since you must now give yourself time for repose."

Lady Melville bowed respectfully to the duchess, and then taking the arm of Mistress Morton, who was waiting for her, she ascended the stairs to her own apartment.

CHAPTER IX.

The continued beauty of the weather tempted the ladies to take a walk in the park on the following day. The duchess accompanied her mother-in-law upon the terrace; whilst Lucy hung upon the arm of Lady Melville, and, with the gentle Arabella, busied herself in pointing out the remarkable features of Godway Castle to the

stranger, whose willing attention drew forth and amply rewarded her childish eloquence.

Whilst they were thus engaged, the well-known call of the horns from the towers of the keep announced the arrival of the new duke. A cry of joy from Lucy answered this long-wished-for signal. Skipping and dancing, she called forth the name of her brother in a childish song. By this, and by the announcement of the servants, Lady Melville was apprised of the arrival of the head of the family; and being wholly unknown to the duke, she felt that her peculiar position must, at such a moment, be almost regarded as an interruption in this reunion of the family circle. She therefore withdrew, after a few unassuming words to the two duchesses, which nevertheless evinced the delicate feeling by which she was guided. She reached the end of the gallery leading to the south wing before the duke's attendants could enter the hall; but she beheld from the window the animation produced in the court by the arrival of the party. In the midst of the group, near an old gentleman, was seen the tall and slender form of a young man, who was busied in returning, with the utmost urbanity, the reverential and joyful greetings of the domestics, while Sir Edward Ramsey kissed his hand with amiable welcome. Lady Melville regarded this scene with that sympathy which a tender heart must naturally feel on witnessing such sincere and reciprocal expressions of true attachment. The old man now drew the attention of the young gentleman towards the entrance of the castle, and Lady Melville hastened to her own apartment.

The duchess, accompanied by her stepmother, her daughters, and their ladies, appeared at the gates of the castle, in order to bless and welcome her son at the threshold of his fathers, over which he now stepped as the rightful lord. To exalt and solemnize such moments, was a prominent feature of her character; nor were those feelings absent in her now, which often gave to her, in the eyes of others, only the appearance of that great moderation and self-control by which she knew so well how to regulate her conduct. When, in dignified calmness, she appeared upon the threshold, yet smiling to the assembled crowd with swimming eyes and the fullest expression of maternal tenderness, then would all willingly have knelt with the

agitated youth who bent before her ; and in the profound silence which respect towards her commanded, her words reached the heart of the most distant spectator.

“ God bless thee, my son, in the house of thy father, of which thou art lord, as he was. May God bless thee with the virtues which rendered him the protector of his dependants, the happiness of his family, the pride of his country, and the friend of his king. Rise, Duke of Nottingham, and enter upon thy possessions with a heart devoted to God.

The young duke sprang up, and again kneeling, begged a blessing from his grandmother. He then walked between the two ladies to the great hall, which, in its majestic grandeur, seemed destined to behold, during many succeeding centuries, the arrival and departure of numerous generations of that race which had already so long ruled over it.

Lord Archibald was no friend to such solemn exciting scenes ; and he did not permit his sister-in-law long to retain the dignified exaltation to which she was not unwillingly raised, and where she generally chose to be placed by the persons around her, who were so much her inferiors in rank and in mind. Having reached the middle of the hall, the duchess turned towards him in her usual stately manner, when he stepped forward, and greeted her with the same affectionate and unrestrained kindness as if he were merely returned from a morning ride, and there were no occasion for any deep excitement, or unusual expression of feeling. He knew well that this proceeding somewhat humbled the pride of the duchess ; but she was by this means more speedily restored to her natural position, whilst at the same time the fetters were more quickly removed from all around which they would otherwise have borne for a longer time. Even when disposed to spread freedom and joyfulness around her, the duchess often failed because a dark secret feeling changed her usual formal bearing into harshness of temper ; and being unwilling to blame herself for this, she held it to be consonant with her dignity, and then could be tolerably disagreeable.

Very different, however, was Lord Archibald's behaviour towards his mother. Her pure character never could or would exhibit

itself otherwise than as it really was; and the highest truth and candour only showed so much the more clearly the harmony and beauty of her refined soul. Her presence afforded true pleasure to all; and whilst blessing all hearts by the joy of loving her, she led all to reverence in her a high development of the human mind. Lord Archibald understood every shading of human character. He was sparing in observations, and did not speak of his feelings; but whoever penetrated his heart, knew that he entertained for his mother the highest reverence. She called forth all his softer feelings, and a respectful yet tender obedience which he otherwise seldom exhibited. This was evinced by the difference of manner with which he now greeted her and his sister-in-law; and it was owing to the high regard of the young duchess for her motherly friend, that she could pardon this little humiliation, which, when women are subjected to it by the other sex, they so willingly seek opportunity to revenge on their own.

But Lord Archibald was too good-hearted and too right-minded not to bring his sister into a pleasant mood as soon as he could. He honoured her character, with all its easily understood faults; and valued her understanding, upon which, perhaps, he set a higher price, in consequence of the prevalent turn of his own character, which led him to consider talent a great security for happiness. He restored the duchess to good-humour by the pleasing announcement that he was commissioned to convey to her the latest intelligence of her father, the Earl of Bristol; as, before he left London, a courier had arrived from Madrid, bringing letters for the duchess, which he would have the honour of presenting to her as soon as she gave him permission.

The duchess had learned, from long experience, that she best retained her dignified demeanour towards him, by not appearing to remark the influence he exercised over her, which imposed upon her his own manner, as if it were her free choice. Both were thus extricated; and this little conflict, in which they perfectly understood each other, was terminated without further explanation, and without any detriment to the good behaviour of either. The young duchess received her brother-in-law's intelligence with the joy which

it deserved, and conversed freely upon those matters of public importance which, at the moment, placed England in a state of considerable suspense.

"Certainly," said Lord Archibald, when they were seated, "the people are far from indifferent to the negotiations which are being carried on for marrying the heir of the throne into a Catholic house. They even blame the king; since it is very generally known, that the prince evinces as great a disinclination as the people, and that he yielded only from obedience to the king, and to his preconceived opinion that a union with a princess under royal rank would be unbecoming. No alternative therefore remained, as only France and Spain had heiresses equal to these expectations."

"And do you really believe, my son," asked the old duchess, "that the disinclination of the Prince of Wales to marry is to be accounted for by a dislike to that church which is so hated by his people? I remember to have heard of this disinclination before anything was said about the negotiation with Spain."

"Certainly," replied Lord Archibald. "Yet his present violent conduct in these transactions appears to refute that opinion, and it is not one of the least important disadvantages of this journey, that the charge of leaning towards Catholicism, which was of no importance in the old king, the people now transfer to Prince Charles as a matter of reproach; thus undoubtedly preparing for the Infanta no favourable estimation, should she become our queen. But the disinclination of the prince to marry arises from former occurrences. My situation has not allowed me to know more than common report, and this says, that, in earlier years, the prince had a violent passion for a lady of rank, which afterwards rendered him indifferent to all others. I cannot myself decide on the credibility of this report; but the fact is certain, that, beyond the common chivalrous gallantry which betokens his amiable temper, the prince never seems to give a preference to any lady."

"Oh," cried the young duke, "how much more amiable his character appears to me, when I think of this deep and firm love, buried in his heart, which has preserved him from the errors of youth, and rendered him so mild and estimable. It always seemed

to me as if there was something unspeakably attractive in his eyes—a mixture of intellect and melancholy, capable of inspiring the most boundless self-devotion in others.”

“The Stuart eyes!” said the young duchess, with increasing coldness. “People have fabled much of their magic power in different circumstances and different persons; and although they never made any impression on me, I see that they have had great effect upon my son. Truly,” continued she more cheerfully, and holding out her hand to him, “you glow in the recollection of those eyes, and your future king may be gratified with feelings which appear to me strong enough to bind you in boundless self-devotion.”

“Yes, dear mother, I would give my life for the prince, whom I loved from childhood, and learned to love still more from the tales which my father has related to me. I shall always be ready to defend his right with my possessions and my blood; though I hope he will never require it.”

He knew not how clearly he shadowed forth the later fate of his prince. Thus it is that feelings arise within us, which, in after life, are called into play, and that we often fill a place, in riper years, which we have only dreamed of and wished for in youth, without thinking its attainment possible. Who may fix the limits which these aspirations, dimly perceptible to ourselves, are destined to attain in a higher will? Who shall say whether we are drawn into our fate through the objects upon which we fix ourselves, or whether it is that fate which makes this direction of our views and feelings necessary, and of which we are unconscious until the moment arrives when they are called into action?

The enthusiastic words of the young man had produced a pause of thoughtfulness, and perhaps might have aroused feelings akin to his own in the elder personages; but the duchess never wished to enter upon unusual topics, and thus kept herself and others within due bounds.

“The prince was the friend of my husband,” said she, as if, by these words, she would express all the claim which he possessed to her sympathy; “but I confess that I have never been able to bring

myself to admire him. That which appears to have elevated him in your estimation, seems to me only a manly weakness. Nothing is more the immediate will of God, than the situation to which we are born. Others, in lower rank, may doubt; but the prince, the future king, must know that he does not belong to his private feelings; and his high calling ought, I think, to influence his mind to loftier thoughts, enabling him to make strong reparation for any little weaknesses of the heart to which he feels himself liable, and rendering him capable of fulfilling all that his important duties demand of him. Kings have other reasons for marrying: they must fulfil their obligations towards their people, and must form suitable marriages without regarding their affections. In other ranks also, and especially as the head of a distinguished family, it is necessary to avoid a passionate kindling of feeling, which only too easily destroys that equipoise by which alone we are enabled to perform extended duties, and thus promote, by our example, the welfare of those who are entrusted to our care. Those who are about to enter upon the course of life, ought always to examine, first, the point on which they are placed by birth. By this means they will choose their path more readily and more wisely, and avoid that reckless development by which they force upon their families what their own passions permit them not to suppress, and which is constantly producing the most unhappy and disastrous results."

"Believe not, dear mother," replied the duke, "that I lightly estimate such confusion; but the heart which is capable of a deep strong feeling in love, would, I think, also feel itself strengthened in the warm impulses of duty and faith."

"I did not wish to blame your sentiments," said the duchess. "Had they appeared to me improper, I would have warned you of your error, without disguising my feeling. I highly honour a sincere devotion to our sovereign, such as I perceive in you; and I should have formed an erroneous estimate of my son had his opinions been other than those he has expressed. Therefore let us pass to other topics, on which I am anxious to receive some information. You must now describe to me your reception by the king."

"The king was very gracious, and his sentiments towards our

family were extremely flattering. But the interview was very brief, on account of his majesty's health. I found him so changed, that, under other circumstances, I should not have recognized him."

"How!" cried the old duchess: "is he suffering? Is he really in danger?"

"I do not think he is," replied Lord Archibald: "but he has only just recovered from a fever; and, at his age, an entire renewal of health takes place but slowly."

"The seems also to be oppressed with grief and care, on account of his son's journey," said the young duke: "he talks to every one about it, and expresses his sorrow and his trouble."

"His extreme irritability shows weakness," added Lord Archibald; "for, until now, at least, the news from Spain is favourable. It even appears as if fortune would repair the precipitancy of our dear prince. For this we have to thank the incomparable conduct of the Earl of Bristol, who, upon the sudden arrival of the prince, took the necessary steps with the greatest presence of mind, and thus prepared the path upon which his highness appears to proceed without opposition."

"And this affair was thus actually promoted by the rash conduct of the prince?" said the old duchess.

"I cannot undertake to say that it will be determined before the return of the prince," said Lord Archibald, smiling; "for the Duke of Buckingham accompanies him, and who knows whether the Earl of Bristol does not push on the affair too quickly?"

"What do you mean by that remark?" inquired the old duchess, with the utmost simplicity.

"Wherefore, dear mother," replied Lord Archibald, "would you bend your pure mind to the serpent-like ways of politics, so full of envy and pride? In your presence, I forget the crooked perversity of state policy, though, from education and established position, I afterwards again revert to it. The most brilliant tidings are brought to us from Madrid. Royal rank is conferred upon the prince; the Infanta has received the title of Princess of Wales; and the king, his court, and the whole high-minded and gallant people, overwhelm

our prince with enthusiastic love ; for they certainly admire this proceeding, and regard it as a proof of the highest confidence in the national character."

"So sure does it appear to me that the Infanta will be Princess of Wales," said the old duchess, smiling, "that if I were still at court, I should assuredly prepare the robes in which I would be present at the bridal solemnities. There appears no hindrance on any side ; and it is quite evident that, notwithstanding my political son and brother, I have gained but little wisdom, if I ought to entertain a contrary opinion."

As she concluded, she rose from her seat, and as the pleasure of the meeting seemed to have banished all other thoughts, she reminded them that the hour of dinner was fast approaching. They therefore now retired to their respective apartments, to make the necessary preparations for joining in the family repast.

CHAPTER X.

Although some time had elapsed since the death of the duke, yet the circle at the castle still led such a melancholy life, that most of them felt the necessity of greater freedom from restraint and more lively occupation. Time had, in some measure, alleviated the sorrow of those who mourned the loss of their nearest friend, and made them inclined at least to become quiet spectators of returning animation.

The return of the present duke and of Lord Archibald afforded a reasonable pretext for the inhabitants of Godway Castle to resume their former amusements, which were, however, confined within narrower limits than had been observed before their late affliction. The unassuming character of the young duke harmonized with all around him. To forget his father, or to become indifferent to his loss, appeared to him so totally impossible, that he was not afraid

of being suspected of doing so. He therefore promoted amusement, not only because it appeared natural to him, but also essential to the transaction of the important business which now required his attention, and for the accomplishment of which a cheerful heart was necessary. He conversed pleasantly with Arabella and Lucy, and enlivened all around him by his cheerful spirits, which were not the result of carelessness, but of a natural feeling which reveals all within because it has nothing to conceal.

The old lady also favoured these attempts at merriment. She seconded all her grandson's efforts, and rejoiced in the effect which they seemed to produce upon the duchess, who loved her son too dearly not to yield to the pleasing influence which he exercised on all around him; although, at first, she felt difficulty in conquering some unpleasant feelings, on seeing him take the highest place in the castle, which her husband, during his life-time, had almost entirely yielded to her. But whilst the young duke assumed that rank which his dignity and title gave him, he did not allow his mother's rights to be invaded, and this reconciled her to the loss of some part of her power.

When the party sat down to dinner, Lucy missed her favourite, and turning to her mother, said, "Mamma, where is the strange lady? Why does not she come? Is she ill?"

"No, Lucy," replied the duchess; and the mention of this mysterious being seemed to excite unpleasant feelings in her heart: "she is quite well, but too diffident to appear before these gentlemen."

"My good brother Robert, and my dear uncle?" exclaimed Lucy. "They would not have been displeased at her being here: would you, Robert? or you, uncle?"

"What do you mean, Lucy? To whom have you granted your protection?" asked Lord Archibald, whilst Robert's inquiring eye glanced at his mother.

"We have a guest, my son," said the duchess in a constrained manner, "concerning whom I have not yet found a suitable moment to tell you. I have, during your absence, promised her the protection of this house, for she, deserted and unhappy, requires it at present. You will oblige me if you will ratify my promise."

"My dear mother," cried the duke, while the blush of surprise and confusion mantled on his cheek, "you are, I hope, quite convinced that my authority is not requisite to confirm your commands and arrangements."

It was perhaps the first time it had ever occurred to him that his mother's pride had led her to err, and he was startled by what he had heard from her lips.

The duchess was satisfied with this favour, and, without further reply, turned to her mother-in-law, and said, "I yesterday heard her affecting story. She is of noble birth, a daughter of the house of Melville, and the granddaughter of Sir Robert Melville. Her parents are both dead, but she has an uncle alive, for whose discovery we must lay claim to your goodness, Lord Archibald."

The gentleman addressed bowed politely, and repeated the name of Melville, as if uncertain whether he were acquainted with any one bearing it. The duchess then related the circumstances under which the lady had become known to her, and ended with praises of her beauty and manners. This recital produced a striking effect upon the two gentlemen, and proved how much power the mysterious exercised over their minds, notwithstanding their efforts to withdraw themselves from its influence.

Now that the affair had once been mentioned, the duchess was anxious to introduce the lady to her new guests; she therefore requested her daughters to visit her after dinner, and to invite her to join the family circle at tea, if her health permitted it. The joy with which this commission was received, excited still more the curiosity of the gentlemen; whilst the duchess became more easy, in the hope that her doubts would now be cleared up; for her mother-in-law, whilst she listened with great attention to the lady's history, had been unable to assist her, and had merely given her that full sympathy which was called forth by the stranger's forlorn situation as well as by her amiable character.

When the tea hour approached, which, for the sake of the elder duchess, was observed with great punctuality, (though this was not generally the case, at that time, in England,) she proceeded, accompanied by Lord Archibald, to the apartment of her daughter-in-law,

who was waiting the entrance of her son, and who immediately sent Pons to summon the young ladies. The duchess had ordered that seats should be placed for the family in the large bay-window, which commanded a lovely view of the park and the surrounding country. Thus, also, they sat opposite the large hall, which was adorned with exquisite pictures, and which was connected with the duchess's room by a pointed arched doorway, before which a silken curtain was drawn, when those in either room wished to be undisturbed. This curtain was now drawn aside, and thus the eye had an uninterrupted view of the magnificent apartment, and of the gilded doors by which it communicated with the rest of the castle.

“The duchess having placed her mother-in-law by her side, resumed her embroidery, and was finishing a beautiful flower with perfect composure, whilst Lord Archibald, standing before her, was giving her intelligence of her various friends and acquaintances at court. She had several times offered him a seat, which was so placed as to enable his eye to command the hall—a position which, for some particular reason, she wished him to occupy. As, however, he did not wish to be interrupted in his conversation, he merely bowed in reply, and remained standing.

At length the doors opened, and the expected visitors entered the hall. Lord Archibald, standing with his back towards them, was so earnestly engaged in conversation, that he did not perceive their approach, and the duchess, in order more completely to divert his attention, now looked towards them, and greeted them with a bow and a wave of her hand. This had the desired effect: Lord Archibald, turning round, looked in the direction his sister-in-law had indicated, and the expression of surprise which appeared in his countenance, as he surveyed the party now approaching, satisfied the duchess that the little artifice she had employed had perfectly succeeded.

The young ladies, accompanied by their governesses and Master Copley, approached slowly, talking and playing with Lucy, who had sportively seized the stranger's veil, pretending to officiate as her page. Lady Melville was a little in advance of the others, and it

might have seemed to the spectators as if her companions were really her suite. She still wore a mourning dress, which, according to her wish, had been made of black silk, and in the fashion of the time. This displayed her graceful figure to great advantage. Her only ornament was the cross already mentioned, which was suspended from her neck by a string of pearls, and rested at the edge of the bodice. Her hair, according to the French fashion, was parted on her forehead, and fell upon her shoulders in long luxuriant curls, its dark auburn colour enhancing the delicate whiteness of her skin; whilst her cheeks were slightly tinged with a roseate hue.

There was something so extremely graceful in her movements, that the attention of all was rivetted upon her. Playfully conversing with Lucy, and entering into the spirit of the little girl's joke, she had stooped down to caress her lovely page. The outline of her features stood out from the dark background of her veil: her eye was cast down, and only the long dark lashes and the beautiful arched eyebrows were visible, giving promise of endless charms, whenever the eye, now concealed under its lid, should be visible. She had nearly reached the doorway before Lord Archibald had recovered from his surprise and admiration.

"Who is this?" he exclaimed, incapable of turning his eyes from her.

"Do you mean Lady Melville?" inquired the duchess, with so much coldness and indifference, that the earl, struck by its contrast to his own excited feelings, cast an inquiring glance upon her; and these two only required this hasty interchange of looks to show that they had guessed and understood rightly each others' thoughts and feelings.

But there was no time for further explanation. The lady entered the room, and turning her face for a moment to those present, she then endeavoured to withdraw her veil from Lucy's hands. Whilst stooping for this purpose, the veil became wrapped round her head, and as she drew herself up, and slowly raised her large dark eyes, standing still meanwhile to consider what should be her next step, she more resembled one of Raphael's ideal beauties, than a human being. The duchess herself was conquered by this lovely creature,

who appeared destined by her charms to delight her, though she at the same time awakened gloomy thoughts; she therefore heard, without surprise, an exclamation of wonderment from her son, who had entered unheard, and now stood behind her chair.

The language of admiration, though only expressed by a look or a gesture, is so easily participated in, that it is often perceptible by those to whom it refers, whilst, with the happy ingenuousness of youth, they do not seek to account for it by their own unconscious pre-eminence, but by the good-will and kindness which they are rejoiced to meet with in those around them. This is one of the beautiful enjoyments of that age when we neither seek nor desire distinction, and when, with generous enthusiasm, we attribute that approbation to the ideal which we have formed for ourselves of the love and charity exercised by mankind. Happy dreams! which lead us to step forth into life with confidence in all around us, and with freedom and activity in our minds; whilst, at a later period, by preferring to remain unnoticed, we yield to the wish of escaping all praise, as well as all blame.

Lady Melville, as she entered the circle with all eyes fixed upon her, felt her soul filled with that trust and innocent pleasure, of which we have defined the cause. Her features became animated, and a sweet smile played upon her lips, whilst, gently gliding onward, she attempted to salute the outstretched hand of the duchess.

"We have you with us again," said the latter, kindly. "Lucy has taken the surest means of retaining you a prisoner, and acts the part of a page in order that you may not again escape from us."

"Did she, then, refuse to return to us?" said the old duchess, as she kissed the forehead of the lovely girl, who knelt on the foot-stool at her feet: "if so, she shall sit by me as a punishment, and assist me to pull silk."

"I have wished for this punishment," said the lady, with a sweet smile. "I longed to be a witness of the happiness which I knew reigned here, and Arabella and Lucy came to the aid of my wishes."

Her eye turned towards the young duke, who stood motionless

behind his mother's chair, as if he could not remove his gaze from a being who surpassed all the dreams of his youthful fancy. Struck by the expression with which he regarded her, she averted her eyes, and cast them on Lord Archibald.

"Permit me, Lady Melville," said the younger duchess, "to introduce to you my eldest son, the Duke of Nottingham, who wishes to confirm the protection which I have granted to you."

"My lord," said the lady, after waiting for his reply to his mother's introduction, "I pray God that he will bless this honourable house, and I thank you for not withdrawing that protection, which your mother has vouchsafed to me."

"Lady Melville," answered the young duke, "can never be obliged to beg protection. Wherever she shows herself, she will always command the services of others. Her presence is a favour granted by fate, leaving but one wish—that it may be prolonged."

He had spoken these words in a voice tremulous with agitation, and he now approached her with an expression of reverence in his glowing face, which strengthened the impression his words had produced. His mother felt disposed to interrupt him, and hastened to introduce the lady to her brother-in-law, Lord Glandford.

Both gentlemen paid tribute to her beauty, but in a very different manner. For the first few moments, Lord Archibald could not express himself with his accustomed politeness, but appeared embarrassed, and as if unable to find words in which to give utterance to what he desired to say. Not so Lady Melville, who suddenly exclaimed—

"Lord Archibald Glandford! You are the celebrated Lord Glandford, the friend of Henry, Prince of Wales! How delighted I am to know you! Oh, my lord, I have often heard of you, for you were loved by my dear uncle and aunt. How long have I respected you, before this moment!"

She uttered this with a vehemence which excited even her own surprise; and the fear of having been too bold covered her face with blushes, and caused her eye to sink on the ground. Lord Archibald had, meanwhile, recovered himself, and now came to her

assistance. He led her to her seat; and the pleasure which he expressed at her flattering speech allayed the apprehensions of the timid girl, who now, regarding him with confidence and with youthful curiosity, perceived with astonishment the plain and almost repulsive features of this celebrated man. What we designate by the words "good breeding," had, in her, become a perfect cultivation of the heart and of the understanding: she not only therefore suppressed the disappointment which this scrutiny had occasioned, but her noble mind taught her to honour the glorious powers of the soul, and to forget the shell in which they reposed. Her heart was touched by the sight of a man so celebrated, and who had also been respected by her dearest friends; and the recollection of her own separation from those so beloved by her, added to the kindness and goodness of those by whom she was now surrounded, made her so much the more susceptible of favourable impressions.

There is a certain feeling of the heart, which differs from a great and settled grief, inasmuch as it is a mixture of joy and sorrow, producing gentle tears, by which we express that to which we cannot give utterance in words.

The young Lady Melville felt this, now that she was delivered from her great misery, placed amongst noble people, and assured of their kindness. What a happiness! what a blessing! for which to be thankful to God! And yet, separated from all that her heart had till now called happiness, her prospects clouded by an insecurity, a loneliness, which no early forebodings had ever shadowed forth—what a sudden accumulation of sorrow!

Our minds often possess an extraordinary power of rapidly surveying all that has hitherto occurred in our lives. The flood of recollection sweeps over the chords of our hearts, touching all, and mocking the chaos which yawns in the depths beneath. This was the case with our heroine, when Lord Archibald inquired the name of his unknown friend. Her lips were closed with grief, and her eloquent eye was filled with tears, which fell upon her hot cheeks, and which were the overflowing of a heavy heart. The sympathy was irrepressible with which all present regarded this lovely face, now so gloomy and troubled, which a moment before had beamed

with cheerfulness. Lord Archibald was destined to be a second time embarrassed, for he looked upon himself as the innocent cause of her sorrow. The ladies, too, could not repress their sympathy, and would have come to their aid, had not the strong-minded girl, suddenly moderating her feelings, resumed her wonted composure.

"Be not angry with me, my lord," said she, whilst a sweet smile flitted across her face, and tears sprang into her eyes; "sorrow is new to me; but my dear friends shall not have educated me in vain, for I will be strong, even in misfortune. Forgive me: I was overcome, because my thoughts had flown back to those I loved. But," added she, with increasing vehemence, "I was ungrateful to feel grief when I have a new cause for thankfulness, in having found here a person so beloved by those who are gone. You will take me to my dear uncle, Lord Mar, whom you probably saw when you were in London? You must have seen him for he is one of the king's courtiers."

As she hastily spoke these words, her eyes beamed with increasing hope, and joyful expectation appeared in all her features. But the earl could not give her the wished-for intelligence: in fact, he had some difficulty in concealing his astonishment at a name, which he had known indeed among the Scottish nobles, but which he had never heard at court, much less was he acquainted with the individual who was thus designated.

"My stay in London, my lady," said he gently, "was on this occasion very brief, and I mingled but little with the persons who surround our gracious monarch. His health compels him to shorten the duration of his levees; and at other times he remained in his private apartments, accompanied only by his most intimate attendants. Besides, as the duchess has no doubt apprised you, I have lately resided long in Germany, and thus the Earl of Mar might easily be unknown to me. I cannot, therefore, at this moment give you any positive information concerning him."

"But," interrupted the young duke, with an impatience created by his desire to serve the lady, "your wish shall be immediately fulfilled. I will communicate your desire to my brother Richmond, who, with his great-uncle, Lord Salisbury, is in uninterrupted inter-

course with the king. He will be happy to search out your uncle, and acquaint him with your present abode. As soon as you have honoured me with your commands, the messenger shall depart for London."

The hopes of the young lady, which had been depressed by Lord Archibald's words, were again excited by the duke's friendly offer. She relied with confidence on his kindness, and her beautiful eye thanked him before her lips could do so.

"You are so generous and compassionate! I am certain my uncle will endeavour to find me, but it will afford me much more pleasure if you will perform what you have suggested. I shall thus, in all probability, be sooner restored to him, and then how much will I thank you and this whole house!"

"Notwithstanding this," said the younger duchess, "I must request you to delay this mission until I have communicated to Lord Archibald the principal facts in your history. He will then, I think, be able to judge better how to make these inquiries."

No one appeared more pleased with this proposition than Lord Archibald; but a slight flush of surprise was visible on the features of the young lady, which appeared to inquire—"Why seek any other means when the way lies so open before us?" and the duke, who was watching her countenance, and guessed her thoughts, did not feel inclined to yield implicitly to his mother's request.

"If Lady Melville willingly consents to this delay," said he gravely, and at the same time respectfully turning to the duchess, "your will shall guide my actions; but I trust that you will do nothing contrary to her inclination: say one word, and I will instantly despatch a messenger to town."

"No, no, my lord, be not so hasty," cried the lady, for her eye had caught the proud look of the duchess, who was annoyed by this opposition to her power; "I will not act contrary to the will of your respected mother. No, my lady, I will not weary you with my impatience, but will rely implicitly upon you."

These words came like an angel's greeting to the hearts of all. The first flush of excitement, produced by the allusion to such important circumstances, had vanished; and the old duchess en-

deavoured to restore a more quiet tone in all around her, whilst her daughter-in-law struggled with her uneasiness. Lord Archibald joined in the lively conversation which followed, and in which the young ladies and their attendants freely took part; but the young duke seemed wholly lost in observation of Lady Melville, and could not withstand the influence which she unconsciously exerted over all. She, however, regarded the interest he had evinced in her misfortunes as simply arising from kindness, and met his eye so innocently, and spoke to him so often, that at length he became animated, although, at the same time, he seemed changed towards all but her with whom he had just become acquainted, and who esteemed him in common with all the members of this family.

CHAPTER XI.

The next morning the family assembled at breakfast in the beautiful centre hall, which was illuminated by the rays of the morning sun. This repast being of a less formal character, it furnished the gentlemen of the party with more frequent opportunities of showing attention to the opposite sex. All sat where and as they pleased, and the conversation was more general and unconstrained. The servants remained at some distance from the table, ready at the slightest intimation to attend their mistress or her guests; and whilst each performed his duties quietly, the absence of all bustle or confusion enabled them to observe what passed at the table, and what they thus saw and heard furnished them with topics of conversation, when, at the close of the day, they were all assembled round the fire in the servants' hall.

Some time had elapsed since a day had begun more merrily than the one to which we allude. The young ladies were animated by the cheerfulness of their brother; Lord Archibald increased their gay mirth by occasionally indulging in a few witty remarks; and

the old duchess, sitting at the head of the table, joined in their lively conversation. She even, with a silvery thread of voice, sang an ancient ballad, which she had often heard from her mother, the Countess of Burleigh, and which related how the poor spinner Josceline was rewarded for her diligence by having her beautiful flaxen locks turned into gold, which she spun into golden threads, without any diminution of her locks, until at last she became the wife of a prince.

"It is not improbable," said she, when she had finished the song, "that the Lady Josceline was our ancestress; for my father owed his virtues and talents to a very ancient race on his mother's side."

All looked involuntarily at Lucy, whose head, covered with golden curls, peeped over the table from under her grandmother's arm; and all felt that the old Josceline had certainly spun golden locks for her little descendant. Lucy could not forget the story she had heard: she did not, however think anything about her own beautiful curls, except when Mistress Dedington's morning task of combing and tying them laid a great embargo on her patience.

"You see, Lucy," said her mother, smiling, "that diligence and virtue are always rewarded. Whenever Mistress Dedington can give me a good account of your industry, you shall sing me a verse of this song; and although I cannot reward you by turning your locks into gold, yet I can find something that will yield you as much pleasure as her golden curls gave to the spinner."

The child's smile disappeared, and she cast a sly glance on Mistress Dedington, who playfully held up her finger in a threatening manner. A sigh relieved Lucy's heavy heart, and she said thoughtfully—"That will be long. But we must all be diligent; for there is not one who loves the good God, that will not try to work."

Lord Archibald had some satirical words ready: but the old duchess, stooping down, whispered something to her little grandchild, which caused her to look up again. She promised to teach her the ballad, in order that she might be ready to sing it to her mother whenever she deserved it.

"And then," said Lucy, "what will you give me, when I first sing Lady Josceline?"

"Well," replied the duchess, "what would please my little Lucy?"

The child placed her hands laughingly over her mouth, and then looked roguishly up to her mother, and stretching out her hands, she cried, "A horse, mamma—a beautiful little horse!"

"A horse!" resounded from all sides of the table, and a loud laugh followed; while she ran round and round, repeating her wish, and receiving jests and caresses from all.

"Did any one ever see such a little child upon a horse?" said the young duke, as he caught Lucy in his arms, and pressed her to him. "You wild child, Josceline did not win her golden curls in that manner."

"Do not scold her, my lord," said Lady Melville, drawing Lucy towards her. "I am quite of your opinion, my dear. There is nothing more delightful than a high-spirited horse, carrying us, as if on wings, and yet obedient to the least touch of our fingers: it is one of the most beautiful of God's creatures."

"To horse! to horse!" cried the young duke, springing joyfully from his seat, and delighted with the praise which his favourite exercise had received from so beautiful a mouth.

All rose from the table. The clear morning air, the brilliant sunny sky, and the fresh green of the country, made it a fitting hour for an equestrian excursion. The elder ladies gave permission to the younger ones to take this exercise, in which they could not participate. An intimation from the duchess, however, detained Lord Archibald near her; and the arrangements for the morning's amusement were undertaken by the young duke, who, with Ramsey, hastened to give the requisite orders, and to select the most beautiful animal in the stable for her who would so well become it.

The young ladies retired to prepare for the ride; whilst Mistress Dedington promised Lucy that she would take her to the old duchess's balcony, from whence they could see the party set off. Thither, also, the elder part of the company betook themselves, for the duchess had promised to relate the stranger's story to Lord Archibald.

They had scarcely reached the balcony when the cavalcade emerged from under the gateway of the castle, and pursued its way

in the valley below, whose green carpeting appeared to give fresh elasticity to the hoofs of the horses. Arabella was an experienced equestrian: she sat steadily in her saddle, and guided her steed with skill; her figure was light and graceful, and her young face looked especially lovely from amongst the dark curls by which it was shaded. She rode in advance of the party, attended by her master, who was proud of his pupil, and gave her many instructions for the management of her steed. These two now turned the corner of the wall, and making a respectful bow to the spectators in the balcony, they flew like an arrow along the green valley.

The duke had given Lady Melville the choice of three horses. They were equally beautiful, but a connoisseur would at once have singled out the elegant Rose, whose tall slender neck, and beautifully formed limbs, could not be viewed without admiration. Snorting, and throwing his head royally back, he displayed his rose-red nostrils; and the foaming mouth, the pointed ears, and the clear brown eyes with which he looked at Lady Melville, presented additional attractions to this enthusiastic admirer of the majestic animal. Whilst his hoofs restlessly pawed the ground, she patted his finely-combed mane with her beautiful hands; and, before the duke could advance to her assistance, she had vaulted into the saddle, as lightly as a feather rises from the ground, seized the bridle, and, with an exclamation of delight, released the spirited creature from his impatient pawings, by giving him the rein.

"They are worthy of each other," exclaimed the old groom, regarding her with pleasure whilst he led forth the horse of his favourite, the duke: "each, in their kind, a masterpiece!"

"What meanest thou?" demanded the young duke, smiling; and without waiting for a reply, he bounded off after the light-footed horse, which, as if conscious of the skilful hand that guided him, showed himself a model of spirit, of graceful motion, and prompt obedience to the slightest touch.

When Lady Melville and the duke appeared together, a cry of delight was heard from Lucy, who loved Lady Melville with her whole heart. The latter, restraining her horse's speed, suffered him to pace round under the balcony, while she raised her beautiful

face, animated with innocent joy, and returned Lucy's greeting. She then hastened to meet Arabella, who had turned back; and thus the little train was formed, which was closed by Corby and the other attendants.

Those who remained behind could not abandon the charming spectacle. The morning breeze moved the waving feathers upon the caps, whilst the outlines of their figures were clearly defined in the pure air. Gracefulness and happiness seemed spread over all, and the less elegant forms of those who followed did not destroy the impression produced by the three first equestrians. The spectators appeared, by silent consent, to wish to remain on the balcony till the line of hills towards Sheffield would screen the riders from their view: when the duchess, uttering a loud cry, made a violent rush to the railing of the balcony, and endeavoured to call back Gaston, who had escaped from the castle, and, laying his nose to the ground, now strove with vehement haste to follow them. The call of the duchess was not wholly disregarded, and Lucy's gentle voice seconded her efforts so powerfully, that Gaston pricked up his ears for an instant, looked up to the balcony, and expressed his joy in awkward gambols; but when he understood that he was desired to remain behind, he uttered a cry, and after looking up, as if he entreated a favour, he set off with redoubled speed after the riders. Breathless with agitation, the duchess regarded the scene before her. Gaston passed through the attendants, and in the same moment sprang upon Lady Melville's horse, wishing as it seemed to embrace her. The animal, not a little alarmed, darted forward in the air, so that it required all her presence of mind to enable her to keep her seat.

The second cry from the duchess in some measure explained the first.

"The wild creature!" she exclaimed; "I feared some disaster from his violence."

After having greeted his master and Arabella, Gaston continued to caress Lady Melville; and this unaccountable attachment to a stranger having attracted the attention of Lord Archibald, the duchess felt that she must now explain. Perhaps, also, she felt that

Lady Melville's doubts respecting this subject were not without reason; for it was only with the most constrained manner, and with averted face, that she summoned resolution to reply to Lord Archibald's remark.

"Gaston," said she, "made acquaintance with the lady upon the terrace, and has since attached himself to her through her compassionate heart and gentle caresses."

"Yes, uncle," said Lucy, "I will tell you about it—how Gaston, my dear, good Gaston, would not leave her until she awoke, and then—"

"Leave us now, Lucy," interrupted the duchess kindly, but with decision: "are the crumbs in your apron for nothing? Feed your pensioners, who are waiting there, and have long ago discovered that their little Lucy brings them food."

At these words Lucy went to the edge of the balcony, where the birch-tree protected the nests, and strewed her crumbs; and then, being gently reminded by Mistress Deddington, went obediently away.

Having seated herself at the open door, the duchess now related to her brother the history of Lady Mary Melville, as it is already known to us.

A pause followed the narration. Lord Archibald appeared to expect that his mother would make some remark upon it; but as she remained silent, he felt himself called upon to speak. He had some difficulty in deciding what he ought to say; for upon the sunken cheek and exhausted features of his sister-in-law, which had become thus during her relation, might be read the commentary on the story which she had been careful to narrate with exact truth, and which he could not unriddle. We utter our thoughts the more fluently, when we are doubtful whether we can succeed in soothing or calming those to whom we address ourselves; and it seemed as if Lord Archibald found himself in this predicament.

"I believe," said he, "that it must be apparent to all, either that the young lady is herself deceived as to her real situation, or, I add it unwillingly, that she has endeavoured to deceive us. What she has told us of her own name and rank will, I fear, be little confirmed, whilst

there is but slight probability of her knowing correctly the station of those with whose names she is unacquainted. I think, ladies, it cannot have escaped your penetration, that, in my answer respecting Lord Mar, I only wished to gain time; for although I could not at once declare the fact to her, there is no individual of that name either at court, or in attendance upon the king. The family is known to you, as well as to myself, from its having played an important though equivocal part in the disturbances of Scotland, during the reign of Mary Stuart. I formerly knew an Earl of Mar; but when I went into Scotland with my father, at the command of the late queen, he was an old man, bent double with age, and sometimes presented himself at the court of James. But after hearing the sorrowful news of the death of Queen Mary, which my honoured father so unwillingly conveyed, nothing more was heard of him, except that he returned to his own castle, near Edinburgh, and was said to have died soon afterwards.

“This earl had only two daughters, by different marriages. His first wife was a French lady, who had come to Scotland with Mary of Guise, the wife of James V., to whom she was nearly related. The eldest daughter of this marriage we are acquainted with: she married Villiers, against the will of her father, I believe, and lived in deep obscurity until after the death of her husband. Her son received a place at court; and we have since seen his mother as the Duchess of Buckingham. The second wife was an Englishwoman,” continued Lord Archibald, quickly, “but I am not certain as to her name. She also had a daughter, immediately after whose birth she died, leaving her sole heiress to Lord Mar; who, I believe, was afterwards reconciled to his eldest daughter, and entrusted to her the education of her sister.

“This is all that I can remember about this family; and there appears in it little which has connexion with the young lady, except that the youngest daughter of Lord Mar married the Earl of Melville. It will be easy to ascertain whether she is a daughter of this marriage; but how can we reconcile her statement that the Countess of Melville had a younger sister and two brothers, when, in fact, she had only an elder sister? And yet,” continued Lord Archibald,

becoming more warmly interested in this history, "even this improbable part of her confession is by far the clearest, for certainly she has good reason to be astonished at her ignorance respecting the second part of her story. She states that she does not know the name of the place which was the scene of her happiness and duties—that she never heard the name of her best friend and relation, contenting herself with calling him Lord Robert. Truly this was a very implicit and relying self-denial, which, however, it appears to me, would not have been much weakened by the simple and natural desire of ascertaining the names of persons so dear, as well as of the places where these beloved objects resided. The unnatural persecution of one uncle, whilst the other appeared so amiable, is also difficult to reconcile, and seems to be based upon a profound ignorance, on the part of the former, respecting the relationship of the lady whom the old chamberlain carried away. Even granting that the lady's fears prevented her from avowing herself as the niece of this man, still, if she were really so, the old servant must have been well aware, if he were ever so simple, that she had a right to her uncle's protection.

"We can thus easily perceive that the concluding links of her story, such as the death of the chamberlain, may have been purposely devised to throw a cloud of mystery over her arrival here, and to render our inquiries uncertain. All corroboration of them rests entirely with the young lady; and although I would not willingly excite suspicion against so young and lovely a woman, there are so many contradictions in her tale, that a very close investigation is requisite."

Lord Archibald turned to his sister at the conclusion of this speech, as if to demand her acquiescence in what he had said; but the duchess remained immovable. Her eyes were fixed upon the ground, her cheeks were colourless, and her head rested upon her hand. The old duchess appeared anxious to withdraw the attention of her son from his sister. She therefore raised herself up in her chair, saying,

"Certainly, my son, there is here a cloud spread over the circumstances of this young lady, much to her disadvantage. But

what, in my opinion, redeems her from the suspicion of wilful deceit, is her own allusion to these contradictions, her natural distress on account of them, and her innocently expressed wish to obtain an explanation of all which perplexes her. Can we then easily believe, even if we reject the eloquent evidence afforded by her innocent appearance, and her whole conduct, that she has devised this tale merely to interest us? Besides, she has given us a glimpse of truth not to be overlooked. I allude to the sudden death of her nearest relation, which appears to me so far important, because it places at least one fact in our hands; as we have all heard of the frightful fever which has followed the great inundation."

"True," replied Lord Archibald quickly; "nearly all the coast has been visited by it, and in Cumberland whole families have died. But at the same time, the commonly reported knowledge of these sorrowful occurrences, gives great facility in colouring individual events."

"Let me acknowledge further," said the old duchess, "that, in my opinion, the improbabilities you have pointed out are not so strong as they may at first sight appear to be. It is, truly, long since I was young; nevertheless, I can very well imagine that a young and warm-hearted being might forget the names of persons and places which had the strongest and most exclusive claims to her attention. You smile, Archibald," continued she, smiling also; "but those who, like me, have numbered three-score and ten years, have their youth again revealed to them. At this period of life, it seems to me as if I could be so charmed with persons as to forget their names and residences. This is the chief privilege of youth, and is possessed by this charming being, in whom, at the first glance, an inward devotion of mind and a deeply feeling heart discover themselves, leading her to resign herself, without reserve, to the suggestions which they offer her. I trust her, above all, on account of those childish tales, which have been made use of with success, but without intending a lie, to lead her away from the truth."

"May heaven, to all whom it loves, give such a defender

yourself!" exclaimed Lord Archibald, tenderly raising his clear eye to his mother. "As you wish to engage my services in this affair, I am quite ready to accommodate myself to whatever course you ladies may decide upon; and I believe that I can be of service, under these circumstances. I certainly think that our *protégé* is the victim of a plot, which we may conjecture to be either wrong in itself, or probably as having, through unforeseen circumstances, taken a wrong direction. I understand, and have indeed seen, that she is in possession of valuable ornaments, which clearly indicate the wealth and high rank of her protectors; and we may hope from the love so tenderly shown to her, that, if her uncle still exists, we shall succeed in our inquiries. Only, I cannot for an instant suppose her to be a Lady Melville."

"Be not so rash, my lord," cried the young duchess, in a strong and abrupt voice, and rising hastily from her seat, whilst in her eye, until now heavy, a train of contending feelings were seen. "What circumstances can justify us in committing the most cruel theft, even the attempt to take away a name? We must not begin to assist her thus: it would render all else worthless that we may do for her; and it is not generous in you thus to offer your assistance."

Having expressed this opinion, she seemed to retire back into herself, regardless of the impression her warmth had created. This impression was very different on the two persons present. Whilst the old duchess looked at her with the warmest expression of love and admiration, the most rigid coldness overspread the features of Lord Archibald, and his large, protruding lips, smiled with an expression which could only wound.

"And will your grace instruct me as to the motive whence this view arises?" said he with frosty politeness. "It is certainly highly important to convince her that she must be unreserved to those whom my honoured sister chooses to assist her; and we have certainly surmounted the greatest difficulty if I may begin my inquiry with the certainty that she is Lady Melville. Meanwhile," added he, with an ironical bow, "I must conclude that your grace has some private reasons, for I have not penetration enough to find this point less ambiguous than the rest."

Lord Archibald, as we have already said, possessed the cutting weapon of irony, which provokes and offends more deeply than angry words. The duchess shuddered at finding herself rebuked by any one in so cold a manner; but Lord Archibald was severe without regarding persons, and he alone sometimes visited her with chastisement in order to make her pliant. She looked up in surprise; but her warmth, as well as her scorn, had alike disappeared. It was as if a slight breath of fear shook her firm voice, and as if the exertion now first relaxed with which she had struggled with her powerfully excited feelings.

“I hoped that you might know an Earl of Mar, who might be her uncle,” said she, turning to Lord Archibald, with a deep sigh and an expression of grief, wholly overlooking how much these words disagreed with those she had previously uttered. “I know nothing more.”

Her head sank exhausted on her heaving breast, and Lord Archibald was softened; for those who rarely show themselves overcome by emotion, as was the case with the duchess, exercise so much the greater influence over others when they do yield. The natural expression of her features, which was by no means unkind, now returned; and it appeared as if all now first found themselves working towards one aim—as if, from a confusion of words hitherto unmeaning, the first real opinion of each one was developed.

But although a better temper had returned to the two principal advisers, there was not that free communication between them, which should seek, by a sincere interchange of thought, the most judicious means of attaining the end required. The duchess was in a position in which one torments oneself and others with fault-finding and heavy difficulties, and she knew not what to advise. She often condemned, with careless censure, what Lord Archibald or his mother proposed; and these both endured no slight trial of patience, by her impetuous rejection of those prudent means, which must necessarily lead to success. But when Lord Archibald had once taken his resolution respecting any affair, he possessed the most unwearied patience. This might be deemed the somewhat malicious consciousness of a superiority, which became more evident in pro-

portion to the obstacles by which it was opposed. He felt assured that his sister concealed something: he therefore watched her closely, and with the deepest penetration, in order to discover her secret by the manner in which she evaded or denied his assumptions. But he found a composed adversary, who knew him well, and who suffered herself to be charged with a temper disadvantageous to her character, rather than permit him to look too deeply into her mind.

The old lady stood between the two, like a good genius. She could scarcely call that patience which she displayed out of love for her daughter, whose violent emotion had not escaped her. It was, doubtless, mortifying to hear her reasonable propositions overthrown; but why should not another person have a different opinion? Perhaps, while in this humour, many things may have been apparent to the duchess, which were unperceived by Lord Archibald; and her gentle heart could make a thousand excuses for her beloved daughter-in-law.

"Now, my lady," said Lord Archibald, after having debated for an hour, and drawing his chair near her, "what are the next commands of your grace?"

"I thought, my dear," said the old lady, quietly interposing, "that you would permit my son to write to Master Brixton, at Edinburgh, to ascertain from him the connexion of the two families. It appears to me a proper beginning; for the most essential point is to discover whether she is really the person she has described herself to be."

"This can be done, if your grace approves it," repeated Lord Archibald. "If Master Brixton is living in Edinburgh, as the young lady has said, my letter can easily be sent to him through my friend the Bishop of Lincoln, and the answer can be returned to us in the same manner."

"Be it so," said the duchess slowly, and with great self-control; "but I wish that you would do it with as little publicity as possible. It seems to me that the inquiries ought to be so arranged that the abode of those who make them may not be known; and more particularly that every question of law relating to the case should be avoided."

"I will not oppose further," said Lord Archibald; "yet this were perhaps the safest way to procure a more speedy explanation."

"It would lead exactly to what, for many reasons, I wish to avoid," replied the duchess. "It appears to me, also, that if the unravelling of this matter lies beyond our power, the dispensations of Heaven have placed the lady under our protection; and we shall have done our duty, and be in the right path, if we endeavour to find the relations which she professes to have. It will then only remain for them to guard her rights; or we will do so, if she remains under our care."

The old duchess smiled her satisfaction at these words, which were by far the most consistent expressions she had uttered during the interview; and it appeared from them that the duchess had conquered her irresolution. Lord Archibald had also a smile on his face, which showed that he had still something to propose. He added, presently, that it would be a great assistance if they would go over the facts of Lady Melville's narrative, in order to discover, by means of the time that she had been on the road, the last abode of the young lady: even if the direction failed, the distance might in some measure be settled. Thus, it might be concluded that the place was distant from the coast, about three days' journey from Cumberland, and somewhat more than a day's journey from the main road to London.

"The lady left the castle at midnight," Lord Archibald continued, "and passed that night and the following day in hard riding, until she reached the little cottage, in the wood. After having been carried back there, and her subsequent escape, she gives us to understand, in her too defective account, that she passed two days and nights on foot, and exhausted. On the third day, early in the morning, she awoke, as it appeared, in the forest adjoining this park; for it is not probable that, in the state of unconsciousness in which she describes herself, she could have proceeded further than through the wood next the terrace; and this is the more probable, as wide roads, easily to be distinguished, lead through it in this direction."

"We will not attempt too much at once," interrupted the duchess, with evident disquiet. "I have promised to protect her against her angry uncle; and who knows if we may not rouse him, by attempting these inquiries, before we discover the protector upon whom she relies? We shall not then have any right to withhold her from the man who seized her, and at the remembrance of whom she feels such intense alarm."

It is doubtful how much longer Lord Archibald would have endured this cutting short and rejection of all his counsels by a woman with whom he held equality, had not the old lady gently taken up the discussion, and with great difficulty made clear the next necessary steps in the wilderness of for and against, of overthrowings and acceptations. As to the rest, it was finally agreed that the lady should be informed that there was no Lord Mar at court; and, secondly, that she should be requested to write a letter, to be enclosed to Master Brixton, it being of the most essential importance to gain intelligence respecting him. The old lady undertook to communicate with her on these points on the following day.

"Then," added she lovingly, "my dear daughter has already done enough in this affair, and she may well permit the old mother to obtain a little merit. I will perform my business properly," said she, smiling, and endeavouring to give a peaceful termination to this grave discussion.

The duchess appeared very willing to accede to this proposal; and Lord Archibald undertook to recount its most important features to the young duke, in order to restrain his zeal within due bounds, and also to persuade him to leave all to the greater experience of his uncle and the two ladies. They separated in tolerable good humour, and Lord Archibald led the duchess to her own apartments, in which she remained secluded till dinner; attended only by Mistress Morton, whose easy benevolent management is well known to us.

CHAPTER XII.

Whoever has observed the movements of the various personages of whom we have been speaking, must conclude that, for some weeks after the events related in our last chapter, matters proceeded in their usual train at Godway Castle. The forms in which a family is accustomed to move are a benevolent restraint against the waves of passion, obliging each individual to control his feelings, whilst he performs those duties which occupy all around him. This was more or less the case with many of the members of the Nottingham family at this time.

Although changed in their relations to one another, as well as in their hopes and plans for the future, we nevertheless find the members of the family assembled as usual around the breakfast-table; and those who were the least at ease, imposing a restraint upon themselves in order not to interfere with those whose cheerfulness was more natural. He who has not passed through a similar ordeal, knows not the difficulty of controlling the expression of sorrow in the countenance, and forcing a painful smile; he knows not the grief-touched gaze which fixes itself on vacancy, nor the distracted answers called forth by the strange levity which makes the inward wounds the greater, while it fails in concealing the agitation of the heart.

The old lady had performed the delicate task we left her about to undertake—that of informing Lady Melville that the name of her uncle was unknown at court. Although she did not add that they doubted the existence of an Earl of Mar—for it was thought better to delay this until they had received Master Brixton's communications—yet this disappointment destroyed all her hopes, and filled her with horror at the loneliness of her situation. After a warm expression of her grateful feelings for the protection vouchsafed to her, she read to the old lady the letter she had written to her former tutor, and to which the duchess could not listen without tears.

This letter bore the impress of deep feeling, which was the more

striking, as her mind displayed an acuteness of perception and a consistency of judgment above her years. This was attributable to the education she had received, which had more especially for its object the cultivation of her reason and understanding. She perfectly concurred in the wish of her protectors to wait until they had heard what Brixton would advise; but at the same time, as suggested by Lord Archibald, she would have preferred to find out the castle from which she had fled. She ventured to request this; but the old lady opposed her wish on the ground that she might probably again encounter the furious man from whose persecution she had escaped. The slightest allusion to this individual sufficed to fill her mind with the most fearful apprehensions, and entirely subdued the wish she had expressed.

Lord Archibald, influenced by what he had heard, was led to form a very advantageous opinion of the young lady's understanding; and the old duchess could not resist confirming this, by adding her own observations, although, by so doing, she widened the difference of opinion between her daughter-in-law and her son. But Lord Archibald was too generous to rejoice in this triumph. On the contrary, he scarcely appeared to notice it; but from this moment his opinion of the stranger was confirmed, and the old duchess did not close her remarks until he had acknowledged that there was not the slightest ground for personal suspicion of the lady.

It was not, however, so easy to persuade the young duke to be silent on the communication which his uncle made to him. What was it that moved him to impatience? Was it that he wished to make use of his newly-acquired power, and therefore disliked yielding to his mother's will? Or was it merely owing to the dictates of his noble heart, influenced by some secret feeling which transformed anxiety for her into enjoyment? Be this as it may, he certainly thought all that his mother and uncle proposed far too slow and too unsympathizing. We will not inquire the motive which induced the earl, when he had related all to his nephew, to recommend him to be prudent; adding, that they had no power to withhold the lady, should she be claimed by the most distant relation, who could give her the protection she required; and that even should she fall into

the hands of those with whom she would be more unhappy than she was now, they had no right to detain her.

But these reasons produced the desired effect; and Lord Archibald requested his nephew to procure a messenger to convey the letters to the Bishop of Lincoln, and to select for this purpose the most faithful servant and the swiftest horse.

The conviction could no longer be withstood by all, that the young duke loved the Lady Melville. He so openly displayed this feeling, that one could not avoid thinking he was ignorant of its nature; but all who had ever felt the echo of love in their own hearts, proclaimed that the young man's hour was come. With fearful alarm his mother at length made the discovery; and she found herself plunged into a whirlpool of difficulties, which threatened to swallow up her strength, and which must be struggled with alone. Every day increased her burden, which became greater from her resolution not to divulge what she believed to be the truth.

Whether Lord Archibald, who must have known the outward signs of love, guessed the state of the case—whether his silence was the result of that prudence, which prevents our disturbing the somnambulist, in the hope that he will find his way back in safety—or whether it was indifference to the emotions of the heart, could not be decided. He received many letters, wrote much, and his uneasiness might be attributed to the state of political affairs, which, it was well known to all, occupied his mind and heart.

Two persons only were unconscious of what was going on. These were the old duchess and the Lady Melville. The former calculated upon Lady Anna Dorset becoming her granddaughter, and this prevented any other idea entering her mind; whilst she attributed the young duke's attentions to his feeling of the duties which he owed, as master of the house, to the young and beautiful girl who had been thrown under his mother's protection. Yet the emotion of the duchess did not escape her mother-in-law's observation, and it grieved her to see her thus worn down by some secret sorrow, which it was evident she did not wish to share with any one.

The Lady Melville, on the contrary, presented a picture of the most perfect innocence. She saw herself the object of the duke's

attentions, and was often astonished at his guessing her thoughts and wishes so exactly. She had heard of love, only by the various tales which her instructors had told her, or through the well-chosen course of reading which she had pursued; but seldom do we completely understand the feeling, until the similitude of what we have read goes forth from our own hearts to meet the like feeling in another. The observations which the young duchess unceasingly made, and which assured her of Lady Melville's freedom from love, gave her some consolation, and she almost wished that her charge knew the duke's inclinations, as she would then have changed her demeanour towards him. But she evinced the gratitude which she felt in so innocent a manner, that he, becoming only the more animated by sweet hopes, laid no restraint on his conduct.

Lady Melville had, however, since her last interview with the elder duchess, given way to a grave and sorrowful frame of mind, and the indications of cheerfulness appeared less frequently in her countenance. What a delightful employment for her young admirer to chase away her grief, and restore the roses to her cheeks! He sometimes succeeded in reviving her natural cheerfulness, for she felt that she ought to restrain her sorrow, and not yield to her feelings of sickly caprice; and therefore his efforts were more frequent and more vehement.

On the morning to which we allude at the commencement of this chapter, the duchess and Lord Archibald had received some letters, the contents of which they discussed a little apart from the rest of the company. This did not disturb the conversation which the young duke was carrying on with the Lady Melville, and in which he strove, with an overflowing heart, to show her his tenderness by means of various little attentions. He told her that he had formed a plan for enlarging the park, and for making new gardens round the lake, which his father had intended to undertake this summer; adding, that, as he had appointed the workmen to meet him on the spot, he begged her to honour him with her company, to assist him with her taste and advice, by which he would be guided.

The lady, with Arabella and Lucy, consented to this proposition; but she added, that her advice could surely be of no avail,

as the plan which his father had formed was of course held sacred by him ; and that, even if the case were otherwise, her taste was quite inexperienced in such matters.

“ Ah, my lord !” added she, sorrowfully, “ your words have betrayed the light in which you regard my situation. Do you not, by asking my opinion, declare how little you expect that I shall find any other abode than this castle, which you ask me to assist in adorning ?”

“ This is not what occupied my thoughts,” said the duke, his heart beating violently at the idea that an opportunity was now afforded him for declaring his sentiments. “ I look with the most perfect confidence to that explanation of your affairs, which cannot much longer be delayed. But may I not hope that you will never know any other home than this, which, through you, is become a paradise, and which offers you hearts beating with the purest love ?”

The duke thought that he had spoken clearly enough, and he hoped that she now knew that he loved her, and wished her to be the partner of his life. But he was mistaken. The young female heart, as yet uninfluenced by the wish to excite such feelings, listens to the most explicit declarations of love, without understanding them, unless the words addressed to her find an echo in her own breast ; and hence arises the power of referring such words to something far different from that to which they really relate. Thus Lady Melville saw nothing more than hospitable kindness in the young man’s words ; and she was about to reply, when the old duchess, turning to her grandson, said,

“ Here, my dear friend, I have good news to give you. Lady Dorset, with all her family, are coming to visit me at Burton-hall ; and, as Lady Anna will be there, I reckon upon your presence also. Surely I deserve a kind smile from my grandson, for bringing him such pleasant tidings.”

The duke was awakened from the sweetest dream of life to a thousand sorrows, and was led back, in embarrassment, to a circumstance which he had entirely forgotten. Lady Anna Dorset was no more to him than any other lady in the kingdom. He had,

It is true, been informed of the negotiation between the two families, and had not opposed it. He had, indeed, in some measure confirmed it by the approbation of the lady, which he had expressed, and this, at that time, was sufficient to induce his family to regard her as his betrothed. But circumstances were now changed; and the feeling of affection which he entertained for Lady Melville satisfied him that what he felt for Lady Anna was not true love. He was moreover convinced that he had never raised hopes, which he, as an honourable man, would be obliged to fulfil; and the desire of seeing himself free, persuaded him that he was so. What excuse would not the peculiar logic of love, which finds its strongest reasons in the feelings, have made in even more entangled cases than the present. In a moment, the young man had decided; and it is not improbable that the coincidences of the moment strengthened his resolution.

"You, my dear grandmother," said he with firmness, "always know how to excite happy feelings in your grandchildren; but I must own that I do not perceive how the Lady Anna Dorset can in any way share or increase the affection which I feel towards you."

"Undoubtedly," said the lady, carelessly, "she wishes to share the feelings which you have for your old grandmother; but perhaps you will offer her a dearer place in your heart, with which she will be better pleased."

"You are mistaken, dear lady," replied the duke: "Anna Dorset is a noble-hearted maiden, but I cannot give her any other feeling than that of respect. I know of no tie which binds me to her more closely."

"Pardon me," cried the old lady, becoming grave, "that I lose my good temper, and remind you of transactions which you confirmed by your tenderness. You must behave well to your old grandmother, and come to Burton Hall, where I will no longer tease you."

The duke kissed the hand which she offered him, and he would have knelt at her feet, and eased his heart by the confession of his ardent love, had he been satisfied that his sentiments were understood and reciprocated by his beloved one. He turned his wistful

eyes upon Lady Melville, who regarded the scene with that childlike innocence which proved how little she fancied herself in any way connected with it, and how perfectly uninfluenced were her affections. He returned to his place with composure, and took his seat by her side.

Lord Archibald interrupted the silence which followed, by saying, as he placed his letters together, "We may expect Richmond here directly. As soon as the prince returns from Spain, he will hasten to us; and he was expected to arrive within two days from the date of this letter?"

"God be praised!" said the duchess fervently, and as if awakened out of the reverie into which she had been thrown by the scene which had just passed before her: "so will joy and consolation come upon me."

Striking as were these words, they attracted but little attention from those around her, who were solely occupied by their own thoughts and feelings. The young people prepared to go to the lake; the old lady and Lord Archibald retired to answer their letters; whilst the duchess, accompanied by Stanloff, who had been absent for some days, proceeded to her own apartments.

"What news do you bring, Stanloff?" said she, seating herself in a chair, which was turned away from him: "were you successful in your inquiries?"

"Your grace," said the doctor, "all my information agrees with the young lady's story. The castle from which she fled belonged to the Lady Buckingham."

"What reasons have you for thinking so?" demanded the duchess. "I must know your reasons."

"They will be found in my narration. I went thither on horseback, and, on the third day of my journey, I reached a wood, surrounding a park, in the middle of which stood a castle. Adjoining this park, and near the road, was a farm-house, which I entered, and found that it was inhabited by a large family—the married sons and daughters, with their children, all living there, and sharing in the business of the house. A table was spread for dinner, and I was invited to partake of their meal. I had thus an oppor-

tainty of inquiring respecting the inhabitants of the castle; but I gained little information, as they merely answered my questions with a simple yes or no, and then went on to speak of their own affairs. As soon as dinner was over, the young folks rose, in order to attend to their respective duties, and I was left alone with the old people. I inquired if the fever had desolated this neighbourhood, and the old matron named the Lady Buckingham as the only sacrifice.

“I know not whether it was from their ignorance, or from their own private reasons, but I could not extract much information on other points. They did not know the present owner of the house, but thought it was the lady's brother. They confessed that they had known Gersem, but whether he were alive or dead was uncertain. They mentioned the fire at the castle, but denied that any one had perished in it. I asked several questions respecting the Lady Buckingham, in the hope of hearing the guests at the castle mentioned; but they simply answered with praises of her benevolence and goodness; adding, that they had never seen any visitors there, but that the lady had often gone away.

“I now left them, and, entering the park, walked up to the castle, of which only a small part, situated in the courtyard, was destroyed, though traces of the fire appeared in various directions. I advanced to the gate, but my endeavours to enter were fruitless; and I was about to turn back, when a little door under the great steps opened, and a girl, in a peasant's dress, came out, running in the direction of the court where I was standing. She was close to me before she observed me, and cried out loudly, whilst she turned to run away; but I held her, and begged her to procure me admittance into the castle.

“‘For God's sake, sir, what do you mean? Nobody can enter there; it is all locked up, and the master is away.’

“‘Is he named Gersem?’ said I.

“‘Gersem!’ exclaimed the girl, alarmed: ‘speak not of him! Let me go: I must not mention him—no one may mention him.’

“‘Well, I will not torment you; but cannot you tell me whether he is in the castle?’

“ ‘Gersem? Oh, sir, leave me! I shall die if you do not.’

“ ‘Well, I will let you go, if you tell me whether I can speak to Mistress Hannah.’

“ ‘Hannah!’ cried she: ‘she is dying—she knows no one. No, sir, I cannot do that.’

“ I then let her go, and hastened to bring you this intelligence; for your grace did not further command me.”

“ I know enough,” said the duchess, and she signed to him to retire. She remained sitting in her chair, and so perfectly motionless, that any one who had seen her, would not have supposed her to be a living being.

At last, however, she was obliged to rouse herself; for Pons came to announce a visit from Lord Archibald, who immediately entered, and with such visible signs of discomposure in his face, that the duchess required only a glance, to feel assured that some fresh sorrow was in store for her. Her first thought turned to Richmond, her only hope of peace and repose—the last balm for her wounded heart. She was certain that something relative to him had occurred, which would deeply wound her, and she regarded the destruction of this last support with a kind of calmness—that calmness, which is afforded by the certainty of sinking.

Lord Archibald would not allow her to rise, but took a seat by her side. He perceived her altered features: he felt that she was suffering; and he knew that what he had to communicate would only increase that suffering. Therefore he yielded to the kindness and warmth of feeling which betrayed itself in his words.

“ Speak quickly, my lord; I am quite composed,” said the duchess, almost voiceless, but with firmness: “ tell me what is unavoidable, without any preface.”

“ Although I cannot help supposing that you have long had a foreboding of what I am now sent to tell you,” said Lord Archibald, “ yet I earnestly entreat that, instead of agitating yourself with fear, you will yield to that interest with which the wishes of your son can scarcely fail to inspire you. I am certainly surprised, and cannot deny that I believed the union between Robert and Lady Anna Dorset was fully determined upon.”

"And what, my lord," said the duchess, raising herself up, "has changed this conviction, which I held as well as yourself?"

"I perceive," said Lord Archibald, "that I am mistaken in supposing that you already know the wishes which fill your son's mind, and which make the Lady Melville the exclusive possessor of his heart."

An exclamation of grief was the duchess's only answer, and she sank back lifeless in her chair. Lord Archibald was embarrassed, for he knew not how to act under such circumstances, and he stood looking at his sister-in-law, hoping that she would revive. But it was in vain: therefore, seeing that activity was required, he at once opened the windows, so as to admit the air freely; he called no one to her assistance, for he was desirous that none of the attendants should know of this occurrence.

At length her consciousness returned. Her eyes were wildly fixed on Lord Archibald, and seemed as if she would gladly have shut out from her memory every trace of what had occurred. Thanking her brother for his considerate cares, which had prevented her from attracting any greater attention,

"Tell me now," said she gently, "what has occurred? What did you come to tell me? I am ready to hear the worst."

"I am not sufficiently acquainted with your views, to know why my communication has so much agitated you; and therefore I hope that you will regard it in the most favourable aspect. Robert, having requested a conversation with me, informed me that he was resolved to offer his hand to Lady Melville, who possesses his entire affection; and he asked my advice how to proceed in the affair, as he could not but perceive that this determination would involve him in difficulties with the Dorset family."

"I confess my lord," said the duchess, "that the astonishment which your intelligence excited in me amounted to displeasure; but this feeling was superseded by my regret at seeing you in the position which my son would have occupied, had not this unhappy passion prevailed over all better feelings. I am at a loss for terms in which to express my displeasure. My son has chosen you as a mediator between himself and his mother. Apprise him, therefore,

that I will never consent to this union. I will endeavour to prevent it with all the power which God and man have placed at my disposal, and thus avert shame and dishonour from his house, whose high character I seem appointed to uphold, since those to whom it is entrusted appear unacquainted with its high requirements."

Lord Archibald did not attempt to interrupt her. Making due allowance for the irritability to which she had given expression, he agreed with her in the most essential points, and felt that her dislike to this union was natural and well-founded. He could not deny that she had arrived at a correct conclusion more speedily than himself, for his mind being absorbed by political affairs, he had listened with abstraction to the statement of his nephew, and had not felt that there lay in it anything insulting to the honour of the house, or afflicting to the heart of the mother. Still he could not approve of the proud and determined opposition evinced by the duchess, for he knew that the most gentle minds, when once they are resolved to act according to the dictates of their own will, are seldom conquered by that pride and obduracy which will yield nothing; and that they resist so much the more obstinately, because their natural character does not lead them to contradiction.

He therefore endeavoured to impress upon the angry lady the peculiar delicacy of the affair, and to persuade her to deal gently with her son. It was impossible for any one to prevent his nephew's choice in this most important matter, since the will of his father expressly declared that all his children should be free to marry as they pleased. The late duke had only regarded the negotiations with the Earl of Dorset as conditional, and they were not to be further prosecuted unless with the free wish of his son. Lord Archibald acknowledged that great difficulties attended the accomplishment of his present hopes, but he trusted that the mother's affectionate voice would touch the heart of her son, and lead him at last to yield.

"Yes, my lord," said the duchess with more calmness, "my imploring voice shall penetrate his heart: the son shall even see his mother praying before him; for never, never, can I permit this.

But tell me," asked she, "did he say anything about the lady. Does she know his views, and participate in his hopes?"

"He had not explained himself to her; and I requested him to delay it until I had apprised you of his wishes."

"God grant that he may comply with your request; for the less that is known of his passion, the more easy it will be to overcome it."

There was a momentary pause, during which the duchess perceived that Lord Archibald was occupied with some idea to which he did not give expression. She therefore resolved once more to declare her decided disapprobation, and to support it by reasons sufficiently powerful to prevent any further allusion to the thought which she conjectured was passing in his mind.

"We are all agreed, my lord," said she, "that nature has rarely bestowed richer gifts upon any one than have been conferred upon this stranger, whom it has pleased the will of Heaven to place under our protection; but whilst our zeal and our humanity are alike exerted in efforts to discover her true position in life, you must certainly participate in my fear that we shall not succeed in effacing the stain upon her name, if, indeed, she can justly claim a name. Need I, then, remind you of that spotless lustre of our own house, which has shone through so many centuries, and to which I only now allude to account for my disapprobation of the romantic self-abasement to which the present bearer of the honours of this illustrious family has yielded himself. This were of itself enough," continued she proudly, whilst Archibald, still mute and abstracted, simply bowed in answer to her remarks; "but my son, by his appearance among the family of Lord Dorset, and by the open admiration which he has expressed of the Lady Anna, has tacitly acquiesced in the wishes of his family. The Dukes of Nottingham must never be alluded to as dishonourable adventurers: the sentiments which they avow by their acts, should bind them as strongly as the words of the rude many. Therefore I must still regard my son as the betrothed of the Lady Anna Dorset, at least so long as she does not refuse to be so; and my husband's brother will doubtless assist me in maintaining the honour of his house."

“Certainly, my lady,” said the earl, somewhat impatiently: “I was dubious respecting what is demanded of me by the name which I bear; but a man who is busied in public affairs has many opportunities of knowing the force of such demands, and of learning to value their truth. The family laws of our house will prevent this stranger becoming one of us, if she be nameless, or of a house in any way tarnished. But these suspicions are not yet confirmed, and you yourself warned me not to be too hasty in judging. Yet I think this uncertainty alone ought, for the present, to restrain my nephew; and a mother so good and prudent as yourself will easily prevail upon her son to attend to her wishes. We may also rely upon Richmond’s assistance: he understands, better than I do, how to work upon the heart; and, although he is younger than Robert, the latter always yields to his influence.”

This allusion to Richmond at once proved to the earl how anxiously the duchess looked to him for consolation. He therefore added:

“Lord Burleigh has forwarded letters from the Earl of Bristol, which I now bring you, and his parental authority must be my excuse if I weary you with a few more questions.”

“You are certain of my attention, and my father has only to command me,” replied the duchess, with composure.

“Well,” continued the earl, smiling, “I must first entrust you with a state secret, which will, I fear, soon become public. Our affairs in Spain have taken an unfavourable turn, and the wise and praiseworthy negotiations of our great statesman, Lord Bristol, appear to have been unsuccessful.”

“But, for God’s sake, my lord,” exclaimed the duchess, alarmed, “what do you mean? All official news tells us the contrary. Were these chimerical dreams? Or have we been deceived into a belief that this business was proceeding favourably?”

“Neither the one nor the other,” replied the earl. “All that was announced to us did take place on the side of the prince and of our court. But you may remember that the journey of the Duke of Buckingham to Spain excited my doubts as to the result, for it was impossible to find a more unfit and malevolent conductor for the prince. The issue has confirmed Bristol’s fears. After

the first few days, he was convinced that Buckingham, by means of his unbridled conduct, and his premeditated insults to several persons of high rank, would bring his master the prince into discredit, despite of his own spotless behaviour. Although Lord Bristol endeavoured to prevent the prince being thus injured, still he could not overcome the first fears of the royal family, that the influence of this man over his master would be productive of harm to the Infanta."

"But whence has arisen this sudden influence?" inquired the duchess. "I understood that the prince thought he could never forgive the insult which Buckingham had formerly offered him; that he only bore with him to please his father, and, even then, with difficulty suppressed his contempt."

Lord Archibald either knew nothing about this, or did not wish to explain it. He therefore continued:

"Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Buckingham is in the prince's confidence, and is thereby so doubly loaded with self-importance, that his impudence oversteps all bounds. The excellent Duke of Olivarez, who, until now, has been our most zealous friend, and the seconder of this royal wooing, he openly declared as his enemy, and treated him so contemptuously, that Olivarez (for they dared not send Buckingham away until the prince's departure) every where avoided him. The interference of Lord Bristol made the affair worse, although he acted with his usual circumspection. For Buckingham broke forth, in the most abominable manner, against the earl's embassy; from which the latter concluded, and very justly, I fear, that the duke's envy was not only excited on perceiving the good understanding he had brought about between the two courts, but that he could not bear to see his honour increased by the completion of the marriage. Be that as it may, immediately after the departure of the prince, the court abandoned the negotiation, assigning such trivial reasons that it can only be regarded as wholly broken off. Lord Bristol is much annoyed, and naturally wishes to throw some new light upon the affair; in which he will probably succeed by means of some intelligence which you can impart to him."

"I?" said the duchess, almost laughing at him: "how can I, at a distance from the court, and sunk in mourning and sorrow, render the least assistance in developing affairs which must be so much clearer to those engaged in them? No, truly; as his daughter, and as an Englishwoman, I can only share his displeasure; but to give him any light on these dark circumstances is beyond my power."

"The information which the earl desires, is respecting the journey of my brother to Spain. He has some doubts concerning the real motives for which it was undertaken, and knowing the confidence which existed between yourself and your husband, hopes to receive more exact information from you."

The duchess bowed her head, and said with a sigh, "My lord, you awaken sorrowful recollections. My husband must have been certain that I would faithfully preserve those secrets which he thought me worthy to share; and this fidelity would frustrate my father's object, were it not, that, as regards that hurried and fatal journey, which was not justified by the reasons assigned for it, I am so far at liberty to comply with my father's request, as to assure him that his penetration was not mistaken; for it cannot be denied that the duke was urged to undertake the journey by some other motive than that of introducing his son to my father. He also felt that this reason would not satisfy me, and he had too much regard for both himself and me to wish to make it appear the true one; well knowing that my respect for his wishes would not allow me to require a degree of confidence which he must have had weighty reasons for withholding from his truest friend."

"But tell me," cried Lord Archibald, much excited by what he had heard, "had he, just before his departure, one of his accustomed meetings with the prince? Conceal nothing from me. Your penetration must have discovered whether the prince had any influence on this journey. This is what concerns your father, and what he hopes to know from you."

"Although I began to speak in the hope of not injuring any husband, and in the certainty that my father would spare my feelings, yet, provided that no inference be drawn against my husband

from my words, I will now tell you all that became known to me, without my overstepping the bounds that were becoming in me. The duke received, in my presence, a courier from the prince, and set out in the evening, after having informed me that Charles had very important communications to make to him. On this subject, there had always been great reserve between us, such as is frequently observed between the nearest relations, where the interests of another are concerned, and where we are conscious that a difference of opinion exists which can never be removed. I never attempted to detain my husband from these meetings with the prince, which robbed me of so much of his company. I never inquired when he would be home, when he was not disposed to inform me; and, on the evening I allude to, I anticipated a separation of some weeks. What, then, was my surprise to see him return on the following day; and the involuntary fear, which caused me to tremble, was only too much justified by the change in my husband's appearance. His noble features were incapable of dissimulation, and I saw in them an expression of gentle grief and disquietude, and, at the same time, a tender carefulness for me, which made me the more uneasy, as I in vain asked an explanation of it. His silence continued until the next day, when his announcement of his intended journey to Spain in some measure disclosed to me the reason of his dejection. He alleged that he was anxious to fulfil the long-cherished wish of my father, who was desirous that Robert should be introduced to him. After this declaration he was silent, and I also; for from that moment I was filled with grief at his absence, and the mystery which hung over the journey struck me to the heart. I only ventured to remind him of the inclemency of the season, and of the absence of Richmond, on which account the wish of my father could be only half fulfilled. He was still silent, and, with a gentleness I shall never forget, said, whilst he took my hand, 'I must go, nevertheless.'

"I collected all my courage, and said, 'God be with you, and I will tell every one that you go to introduce Robert to his grandfather.'

"After my acquiescence in his will, he said a thousand kind

things, which betrayed to me his gratitude for my forbearance. But I was not deceived: we felt, at our parting, that we should never meet again; we could not drive away this sorrowful foreboding. Now you know all. There is no doubt that the prince ordered this journey—its object is, as you see, unknown to me, and must also remain unknown to my father; for the duke went to him only to die.”

Lord Archibald felt moved by respect and sympathy for his sister-in-law, and this gave him a warmth and gentleness of manner, which, easily perceptible, was of service to the duchess, especially as it came from an individual, whose feelings were not easily excited.

In the strong expression of grief and generosity, with which the duchess spoke, he had nearly lost sight of the political bearing of the affair; and the soft words by which he testified his respect for the sufferer, formed a bond between these two persons, who were generally opposed to each other.

The duchess was the first to remember the aim of this conversation, and begged him to inform her if the Earl of Bristol had been able to obtain any intelligence from her husband respecting his views, during the few days which elapsed before his mind became clouded by sickness.

Lord Archibald replied, that, from her father's letters, it appeared that the duke was ill when he arrived at Madrid; but after a short interval, which he devoted to the indulgence of his family feelings, he asked for particulars of all the circumstances connected with the projected union between the Prince and the Infanta. The Earl of Bristol had expected to receive from his son-in-law, as the dearest friend of the prince, some news relative to this affair; but the duke referred him to later communications, which were never made. During his delirium, he talked of his presentation at court, of a private interview with the Infanta, and frequently repeated the name of the prince, till all clearness of intellect was lost in the darkness of his wandering mind.

“I fear, therefore,” said the duchess, after a pause, “that my father will be left to his own penetration. But tell me, my lord, if

you dare, is there any doubt respecting the prince's wishes, which he seems to have made so public by his adventurous journey to Spain?"

"Strange as it may seem," said Lord Archibald, "Lord Bristol imagines that the prince does not desire this union, and that his journey to Spain, and his reconciliation with Buckingham, were the means employed to terminate this affair, without offending his father, the king, by an open refusal. The earl could not obtain any explanation from the prince of the reasons of his journey. He talked incessantly of the surprise which the Spaniards testified on his arrival in a country with which we had, till very lately, been at enmity; for the court did not allow the people to know of it, lest they should annoy or insult him. The prince vehemently urged his desire of seeing the Infanta alone; and this wish was so violently supported by Buckingham, that Lord Bristol could not avoid concluding that some secret motive existed; whilst at the same time he knew that such an interview could not take place, as it was against the etiquette of the Spanish court. Although little exertion was made by the prince to restrain the unbridled licentiousness of Buckingham, he did not participate therein; and it annoyed him that the principal person in his suite, and the only one of high rank, should dare to commit such improprieties under his eyes. In vain did the earl beg him to be reconciled to the Duke of Olivarez, towards whom the prince assumed a cold demeanour; and hence this proud man, whom the earl had gained over to us by his prudence, is become our irreconcilable enemy. The courier whom the earl sent to me with these explanations, preceded the prince by a few days; for the despotic will of Buckingham insisted on their returning through France, as if he would display to those courts of Europe, where it would be most advantageous to him, the influence which he exercised over the heir of England, and, at the same time, make trial of their politeness for his own gratification. Thus we bequeath to posterity a strange example of our prudence, and a proof of absurdity which carries us back to a century before that Elizabeth whose successor we would commend."

Here the earl paused. He had none of the pedantry of politi-

cal mystery, and least of all would he have thought of displaying it towards a woman, who had just given him such a proof of her self-command; but at the same time he felt a certain dislike of bringing to light affairs so annoying to his English heart. Yet, however disposed to silence, he could not avoid replying to the duchess, who now inquired whether the same motive was attributed to her husband's journey, as to that of the prince and Buckingham.

"We can only connect facts together," said he; "but this much is certain, that the prince was the cause of my brother's journey, which appeared to tend to the same end that Charles afterwards pursued. The last words he uttered seemed to relate to his friend's affairs, and his efforts were likewise directed to an interview with the Infanta. Immediately after the duke's death, Charles was reconciled to Buckingham, and then the journey took place. From this it appears that the prince, finding that the Duke of Nottingham could not fulfil his wishes, placed confidence in another, who incited him to exertion. These, however, as you may perceive, are only conjectures, formed one out of the other, but wanting the principal groundwork—the knowledge of the real aim of all these exertions."

"Oh, God!" sighed the duchess, "then was the happiness of my life ruined by the prince, who stood as a dark shadow by the side of my husband, and to whom I was in continual fear of being obliged to yield his society. We must ever remember, Lord Archibald," added she, "that in God's hand are the issues of life. I can truly say, that this beloved being was ripe for death, and might as surely have been overtaken by it here, in the bosom of his family, as after the difficulties and cares of a long journey. Nevertheless, perhaps an overtaking of mental and physical strength may have hastened the fatal moment, which might, under other circumstances, have been deferred to some more distant period. Perhaps it was thus. Oh! my lord, see how difficult it is to be resigned to this thought, for then my grief must be augmented by the consciousness of having to reproach him who has caused it."

"Go not too far, my lady," said Lord Archibald, mildly: "remember that the limits and exactions of this friendship, as fixed

by God, might have been asked and granted without any misgiving of the consequences, and without reproach either to the prince or the duke, who always represented a truly beautiful picture of this pure relation."

"So let it be," said the duchess, rising; "it is time to end the melancholy thoughts which always fill me when I think of the mysterious influence which this friend exercised over my husband. I cannot forget that the place is empty, which he filled so worthily by protecting and guiding his family; and," added she, gently, "perhaps I ought to thank God for having preserved him from the sorrow with which the attachment of my son overwhelms me. What grief would this have caused him!"

Her melancholy eye here met the glance of Lord Archibald, who, despite the sympathy which he had felt for the sufferer, thought her grief for her son somewhat exceeded what the case demanded. She seemed to divine his thoughts, and said, as if overpowered,

"I must appear to you like a fool, who, unskilled in the duties of her lot, increases them in her imagination in order to veil her weakness; but if you could penetrate the greatness of the grief which is in store for me, you would not call me a weak woman."

"In this case be assured, that, by what you have just told me, you have given me a lesson of moderation, as regards the secrets of others, which places you high in my esteem. But do not forget that it is your husband's brother who is by your side, and in whom you may trust as implicitly as he did whom we all regret.

The strong man here paid, out of the deep locked-up feelings of his heart, a sincere tribute to his brother's memory; but always desirous of shortening agitating moments, he bade his sister farewell, and they separated with increased love and respect for one another.

But far less gratifying for all parties was the conversation between the duchess and her son. She found she had only too much reason to do justice to Lord Archibald's knowledge of human nature, and to share in his apprehensions; for she now first learnt the bounds of parental influence and authority over individual feelings, and also the weakness of her will.

Her situation was so much the more painful, because she could

not speak to her son with the full force of truth; for although she regarded as impossible the accomplishment of the union he desired, still she could not tell him all the reasons against it. Her arguments had not therefore that consistency which is necessary in speech and in deed, the absence of which vexes the strong-minded, and of which she knew the good result. The total absence of reserve with which he laid bare his whole heart to her, was still more disadvantageous to her cause; whilst her own want of openness must have lowered his estimation of her understanding, which he had hitherto regarded, as infallible, but which, now that love had so much exalted his own mind, no longer seemed to resemble that which had been the guide of his early years.

A conversation of some hours, during which she suffered indescribably, brought her no nearer to the attainment of her wishes. She saw that he was the same respectful and affectionate son he had ever been; but that now, for the first time in his life, he had a will, and supported that will with all the eloquence of a heart loving for the first time. On the contrary, she appeared to him to have nothing to urge against his wish, beyond what was caused by her pride and her prejudices; and, at the close of the interview, she was obliged to confess, that all she had said was of no avail, and that her influence had failed in producing its wonted effect.

At last, however, she won from him the promise that he would conceal his feelings from Lady Melville until something had been done as regarded the Dorset family; and she found him so compliant to this request, and so penetrated by the demands of honour and decorum, that she could no longer be angry with him, but was gratified to find that he did not dishonour his noble education. The duke, on the other hand, left his mother with more hope than he had before dared to cherish; for construing her exhausted condition, which rendered her unable to urge further objections, into compliance with his wishes, there seemed to him no more difficulty than that which regarded his relation with the Dorsets. The satisfactory arrangement of this difficulty he hoped to accomplish through the agency of his grandmother; and having mentioned this hope to the duchess, he took his leave of her in the most affectionate manner.

But scarcely had he left her, before her mind regained the clearness which it had lost in the torpor caused by her feelings; and the grief excited by her imagined knowledge of the true situation of affairs, was so much the more frightful, when she remembered that the conversation from which she had hoped so much was not only past, but that she was further than ever from the accomplishment of what she had desired. She bitterly reproached herself for having left her son even a shadow of hope; she thought that now she must undergo the misery of discovering her secret, and she fervently prayed for guidance and assistance. Tears flowed; her heart was relieved; and a saving angel, sent by Heaven, stood by her side. It was her mother-in-law, who, whilst she was weeping, had entered the room unheard, and had approached her, alarmed by the condition in which she found her.

The duchess attempted to control her feelings, whilst she gazed on her with an expression that seemed to inquire, "Are you a human creature? Are you the help for which I prayed to God?" She repeated these words aloud, and then sinking down at her mother's feet, she cried, as if inspired,

"Yes, thou art my deliverer! God has sent thee to me. To thee will I reveal what burdens my heart. Thou art the help which he has sent me: from thy pure soul, shall I learn the right and the wrong, and from thee shall I hear what I ought to do!"

She sprang up with a force that seemed to contradict her exhaustion, and led her astonished parent to a couch, upon which she also seated herself. The most uncontrolled excitement was visible in her demeanour, and the old duchess was obedient to her mute requests; but the fear with which this strange behaviour filled her, deprived her of the power of expression. She felt unequal to inspire the confidence which her daughter-in-law seemed anxious to repose in her, and she regarded her distracted features with the deepest sympathy. The young duchess remained silent by the side of her mother, pressing her hands between her own, and, with her tearful eyes fixed on the ground, she appeared wholly absorbed in thought. At last she looked up, and, at the sight of the anxious face which had been watching her, she felt in some measure freed from her

anguish, and threw herself into the arms which were always open to receive her.

"Hear me first," sighed she, "before you call me weak. I cannot longer bear the torment of this secret, and I require your assistance. You have the same holy reason that I myself have for concealing what I am about to tell you; but I cannot break my vow of silence, until you have engaged to observe the most profound secrecy respecting that which I have to communicate."

"I will promise whatever you desire, my child, and you may without hesitation entrust me with the heavy burden which thus distracts you. Hasten, then, to relieve your heart, and God will give me strength to support you."

"I must go far back into the past," answered the duchess, "for what I have to tell you is woven by an invisible thread throughout the web of my life. Its unseen and yet undeniable existence has robbed me of all courage for complaint, and deprived me of all enjoyment of life. Oh! how deeply do I feel its influence over my whole being. It strengthened the great fault of which I was conscious, and to which I allowed full sway, in the hope of hardening myself against this secret sorrow. Mother, if it be a crime to love a human being too much, I have committed that crime; but he whom I loved beyond all bounds was your son, and to your heart I plead for indulgence.

"You are aware that my honoured father, after the death of my mother, which occurred when I was ten years old, took me entirely under his own care. Morton only remained by my side as a female protector; and she, though still young and beautiful, lived only in her love for me, and was perfect in the fulfilment of those duties which my father assigned to her. We spent together those hours in which I was absent from my father; but as I was the only remaining memorial of his affections, and as my society was to him a source of consolation, my days were chiefly passed in his quiet and silent study. This secluded life suited my disposition, and I soon acquired that earnestness and gravity of character, which, in my father's richly-gifted nature, was combined with a cheerful activity of mind and a tender susceptibility of heart. I, however, was

not endowed with these latter qualities, and they were less cultivated by me than the pride which found an echo in my own breast. Everything around me fostered this fault; but as it never led me to injure others, it did not awaken my father from his affectionate dream of the superiority of his child. Morton was my good genius. I loved her with sincerity, and the firmness upon which I prided myself disappeared when with her. Whilst in her presence I was wholly changed, and learnt to feel like a woman.

“The name of him whom I afterwards so fervently loved, early found a place in my heart; for Morton, aware of my father’s intentions regarding my marriage, took frequent opportunities, in the course of conversation, to prepare me for the happiness which awaited me. My father, who had relinquished public life until the time of my marriage should arrive, now agreed with your husband that the decisive moment was at hand. Morton apprised me that both families intended presenting their children at court, and that I should there behold him who was to be my husband, and who hoped to find in me his future bride. My father gave me the same information, but with further explanations; and I was angry with myself, for the wild beating of my heart was opposed to that proud dignity which I had resolved to maintain. Alas! only too soon was this pride called into action.

“Before we met at court, I had received from you, in your house, your maternal blessing, as the friend of my dear mother. The moment when I first beheld your son is present to me now, yet I cannot describe to you the impression which this dearly-loved form made on my heart. All that I had formerly hoped, dreamed, or wished for, lay like a lifeless vision behind me, undistinguished amidst the events which formed the current of my youth. He approached me: his beautiful eye created a delightful sensation within me: we conversed, and a thousand times that evening did I give him my whole soul.

“On my return home, my father left me with a smile of satisfaction; and when Morton met me at the entrance of my room, she stepped back, and withdrew from my offered embrace, as if uncertain whether it was really I who stood before her. But I sought

her affectionate sympathy, and with triumphant joy I exclaimed, 'I have seen him! I have seen him!' What happy days followed! Your tenderness induced you to believe that your hopes were fulfilled; for although Robert had not yet demanded my love, yet I was the dearest to him in the large circle of the court; whilst I, regarding him as certainly my own, strove to conceal, by the warmth of my feelings, those defects which he might otherwise have perceived in me.

"Just at this time the king called the family of his haughty favourite to court. You know what followed; but neither you nor any one knew the anguish of my heart. On the evening that the Lady Buckingham appeared at court, a fearful change came over me. Supplanted by the power of a more gentle and less impassioned woman, my character returned to that coldness from which it had been diverted by love, and to which perhaps it would never have returned had I been permitted to bring it to the great and virtuous exaltation of which it was capable. But being thus thwarted, and so cruelly disturbed, my heart could not change this violent grief into mildness; and I am conscious that the rich enjoyments and sweet happiness of my subsequent life never brought the return of that better nature which had thus been crushed.

"Oh, my lady, do not turn from me!" exclaimed the duchess, for she saw that the old lady was trembling with agitation: "be not angry with me, and I will confess all to you. The remembrance of that day now impels me to do what I have never before deemed possible—to reveal my fearful grief; so that, relying implicitly on you, I cannot restrain myself from telling you, that all that my perception led me to fear, soon became certainty. Scarcely had the beautiful Lady Buckingham appeared, when I perceived that change in Robert which soon remained no secret to any one. He who had taught me what love was, now showed to all that what I alone had a right to demand from him, was bestowed upon another. After the first shock of grief, I saw that I was lost—that he, whom with rapture I had only a few hours before called my own, had turned from me, and even ceased to regard my presence. Careless of all around, and like the child who, chasing the butterfly, with

his eyes rivetted upon it, sees nothing else, he followed her steps, as if that were the sole business of his life. You may imagine how jealousy, that dark demon of the soul, rose up within me, and produced an indescribable feeling of coldness towards the lady's merits -- a dark bitter misery, which clouded my soul. Imagine, also, how vainly I expected Robert's return; whilst I, through my fearful anguish, incapable of meeting Buckingham's advances with the same cold pride as formerly, gave him room, by my hesitation, to behave himself even more boldly. Think of all this, and then you can conceive the state in which I returned home, and sank lifeless into Morton's arms.

"I passed the night on the verge of insanity. Between those fits of mental abstraction, which have never since wholly left me, Morton learnt what had occurred; and to the hope which she, more affectionately than prudently, revived in me, I owe the recovery of my understanding, and the resolution I took of returning to court on the following day. Alas! I went but to convince myself of my unhappiness. From that moment, I never received a look of love. He regarded me with only brotherly affection, whilst he gave to her the fiery love of which his heart was so susceptible. Overwhelmed by the homage of others, she, on the contrary, had scarcely a look or a smile for him, who, that he might not be deprived of this rare favour, remained, as it were, chained to her garment, lost to all the rest of the world, and hardly conscious of existence except in her presence.

"I passed my nights weeping, in Morton's arms; but when the day came, and the hour arrived at which the court assembled, I called to my aid the fashion of the time, to hide the falling off of my figure and the paleness of my cheeks, for I feared lest any suspicion of my affliction should be excited. My pride was awakened. The idea of being scorned in the face of the whole court, through the bold conduct of Buckingham, and my dread that this should be detected by your tender love and by my father's melancholy eye, gave rise to the task which I imposed upon myself, of removing every thing that could arouse a suspicion of my interest in this change. By this means, when once I had quitted the privacy of my room, I

was enabled to assume an appearance of more life and cheerfulness than I had before displayed.

“ Then came the mourning for Prince Henry. The court no longer met for amusement, and every pleasure was at an end. Those families who were intimately acquainted visited each other quietly, and I often came to your house; but I never saw your son, who did not quit the prince. It was this separation which first showed the whole strength of my affection for him. His absence deprived me of all my courage, and there were moments when I felt as if I could sooner bear to speak to him as the husband of Lady Buckingham, than to be separated from him. The energy with which I had resisted my sorrow had vanished, and gave place to bitter despair. I remained in London, only because he was within its boundaries.

“ Such were my feelings, when Morton informed me that Lord Derby requested an interview with me. I was so overpowered at the prospect of seeing him, that I did not perceive that there was anything unusual in this request. Morton left me. I heard him enter, and, on looking at him, I sank with a cry into my chair, alarmed by the change that had taken place in his appearance: the smiling face of the blooming youth had become grave and earnest, and, like that of an old man, was furrowed by grief. He saw my terror, but instead of giving me an explanation, he sank at my feet, and begged me to fulfil the wishes of his family, by giving him my hand. I was speechless with astonishment. Love and pride struggled fiercely in my heart. I knew that affection had not led him to me, and I collected all my courage, in order to drive him from me. After a few words, my pride conquered: I repulsed him with coldness; and lost, in grief and anger, I reminded him of his love for Lady Buckingham, which was apparent to all the world.

“ At first, I feared that I had killed him with these words. His head sank in his hands, and only a struggling sound escaped his lips. This spectacle divested me of all my pride. I hastened to him, and compelled him to sit down. I could have thrown myself at his feet; and what I should next have done, I dare not think of. But he recovered, and now displayed to me all the nobleness of his character. He confessed his love for her, but added that insurmount-

able difficulties separated him from her. She could never be his wife, and this conviction had led him back to the holy duty which his parents had so generously laid out for him. He inquired whether I would venture to trust him; he told me that he honoured and esteemed me beyond all women on the earth, and that this feeling had given him courage to take this extraordinary step; that only in the fulfilment of his duty, and whilst striving to make amends for that of which he had been guilty, could he expect to find peace; and that he could only hope for happiness if I accepted him, and, with sisterly love, would endeavour to heal his heart. He reminded me of the wishes of our parents, to whom we should, by our union, give great joy. I loved. What he offered me, assured me of his companionship and presence during life. What he told me, increased my reverence for him, and gave me the sweetest assurance of his respectful friendship, which, after my great suffering, appeared to me of inestimable value. My pride vanished. He received my consent; and you know that the king, who was informed of it by my father, also gave his approbation.

“What happened subsequently is perhaps unknown to you, but you shall now hear it. An hour afterwards, Buckingham visited me, and, with the assurance of a vain man, offered me his hand. With what triumph did I inform him that I was the betrothed of Lord Derbery! With what joy did I perceive the astonishment which this intelligence excited in him! But it was a short and unwise triumph, and was attended with frightful consequences, for it aroused the anger of this tyrant. He thought his sister dishonoured, because every one had believed her betrothed to Robert, whom he now hated as the cause of his present refusal. He first ill-treated his unhappy sister; then he sought my husband; and you know that his conduct led to a short banishment from court, and to a duel with my betrothed.

“We were married. You and your husband went to Spain, and we retired to Godway Castle. Your son was an angel. Alas! I cannot think of my conduct to him without self-reproach. He was now mine, and the desire of my heart was fulfilled; but I could not forget that he had not married me from love, whilst, on the

contrary, I had given to him my whole glowing heart. My proud soul was roused. A suspicion, never to be set at rest, arose in my mind, and the most trivial occurrence was sufficient to render me unjust towards him, or to excite in me the most violent though secret jealousy. But I must now tell you what served to nourish these feelings, in order that you may not too strongly censure the weakness and sorrow which secretly oppressed me.

“ You are, doubtless, aware that the prince’s conduct at our marriage gave room for conjecture. It is well known that, when apprised of our approaching nuptials, he gave vent to his rage against Robert; but for this outbreak no satisfactory reason was assigned. I afterwards accidentally heard that, before our marriage, the prince and Robert had visited the Lady Buckingham (whom I supposed to be residing on her own estate) at a castle which belonged to the former. This was told me, on the morning of my wedding, by one of my women, who had heard the fact from her aunt, the house-keeper of the castle. She had not the least idea that her intelligence would affect me; but my heart drew a chain around itself, and became benumbed. Alas! how much was owing to this moment.

“ In vain I hoped for an explanation from my husband. He was silent, and avoided every opportunity that I gave him of elucidating the matter. Years rolled on, and my happiness appeared secure; but however devoted my husband proved himself, I could not wholly banish from my mind the disquiet of suspicion. Journeys, of some days’ duration, and on the nature of which he was silent—letters which were privately delivered in my husband’s room, where the messenger remained until his answer was ready—all convinced me of some mysterious proceeding, which he wished to conceal from me, and to which I could not avoid giving an interpretation that increased my jealous torments. In vain did my love and respect to him endeavour to resist these insulting suspicions: my heart was still annoyed.

“ In conformity to your wish, we went to London, taking our second son, Richmond, with us. During our residence there, my husband betrayed an uneasiness which could not be accounted for by any thing in our own affairs. There had never existed between

us that unconstrained openness which ventures, under such circumstances, to make a request or to ask a question; and every thing seemed so completely to authorize my suspicion, that I deemed myself generous in abstaining from all inquiry respecting it. With concealed yet bitter grief, I received the announcement that he was compelled to make a short journey, and that his return would be uncertain. Some weeks after his departure, I received an affectionate letter from him, in which he informed me that he should be at home again in a week.

“On the same day, my husband’s jeweller came to the house, and, as I could not conveniently receive him, Morton saw him, and brought to me two bracelets, which had been ordered by my husband. They were composed of diamonds of inestimable value, and their workmanship was singularly beautiful. I could not repress the hope that my husband had intended them as a surprise to me. But I was not long allowed to indulge this idea; and you may imagine how my thoughts wandered on learning that Morton was obliged to return them to the jeweller, who stated that the earl had chosen them himself, and had ordered him to make some alteration in them by adding more costly jewels; and also that he had been especially forbidden to let me know of them, but that, finding they were not sent for, he had acted on his own judgment, and brought them to the house. Robert returned, and evinced towards me, and to all who were dear to him, the same tenderness, affection, and carefulness he had before displayed; but I did not receive the bracelets, although Morton assured me that they had again passed into my husband’s hands, having gained her information from the jeweller himself; and she concluded, that if I had not already received them, I would soon do so

“We returned to Godway Castle. My husband, who had bought his horses in London, and taken them to the castle with him, met with an accident just before we arrived there, which injured his head. He was conveyed to his apartment; but as Stanloff required light to examine the wound, he was removed from thence into the adjoining saloon; whilst I, in obedience to Stanloff’s commands, retired to his bedroom to await his arrival. Here, oppressed by the

anxiety which I felt, I leaned for a time against some carving on the wall opposite the bed; and gradually becoming weary and exhausted, in order more effectually to support myself I seized hold of a portion of the carving which projected from the rest. How great was my surprise to find this yield to my pressure; the panel receded into the wall, and, alarmed by the unexpected occurrence, I fell fainting to the ground. Eventually, I succeeded in reaching a chair, into which I sank, completely overpowered, and my eyes closed. I was aroused by the fear of my husband's alarm, should he find me in this condition. I opened my eyes, and, oh God! what did I behold! A female form, clad in white, decorated with flowers, and revealing the brilliancy of a beauty well known to me, appeared to advance to me from out of the wall. It was the picture of the Lady Buckingham, which stood smiling before me, and opposite the bed of my husband, where you may at this moment find it.

"I know not how it happens that the greatest griefs, which threaten to destroy our lives, sometimes impart to us that degree of mental and physical strength, which enables us to act in cases of emergency. A slight laugh, which made me shudder, escaped my lips. I again approached the wall, and recognised the carved flower which had led to the discovery. I touched it: the panel instantly closed, so completely that nothing could be betrayed, and I stood as if dreaming before the wall which enclosed this mystery. When my husband was brought in, I was found lying insensible upon the floor. During the same night, Arabella was born. A violent fever ensued, and brought me to the brink of the grave. When my senses returned, I recognised my husband and Morton, who were attending upon me. Alas! my delirium must often have betrayed my secret torments. We did not explain ourselves, and Morton's lips were sealed; but never has a human being spoken more eloquently to my heart than my husband did. His whole manner sued for pardon—his every action evinced love and sincerity. Yes, I might have called myself happy, had not the prince now visited us, and stood between us like a bad spirit; for his visits

never failed to take my husband away upon a journey, which always caused painful suspicions. I knew that the Lady Buckingham remained unmarried, and lived in a castle not very far from ours. I am now convinced that the prince was the instigator of that journey to Spain, which separated me from my husband for ever; and when I reflect that there rested not even a shadow of reproach upon any portion of his life, except that mysterious point which so much excited my grief, an inward feeling, allied to hatred, tells me that the prince promoted and conducted the only thing for which he could be blamed."

"Dear child," said the elder duchess, interrupting her daughter-in-law, who had pursued this long and affecting relation with so much eagerness that she had been unable to interpose a single word, "how deeply your communications agitate me. The past now appears to me so melancholy, that it reproaches me with neglect. Whilst I indulged the fondest hopes of your happiness, your noble heart was lacerated on account of my son, whose conduct in this matter seems, to say the least, to be veiled in mystery. Generous, noble creature, that you are—you, who would rather augment your own grief, by concealing your husband's fault, than lower him in the eyes of others by betraying it. As a mother, I feel deeply indebted to you: you have truly protected my beloved son."

"And have I really done so—have I protected him in truth, or only in your affectionate belief?" exclaimed the duchess. "Until now, I have done it alone, and in my own strength. Henceforth you must come to my aid, for my work is not yet ended; and now that he is no longer by my side, to sweeten the sacrifice and to strengthen me for it, the heaviest of all my trials is come upon me. Mother," added she, with streaming eyes, glowing face, and wandering looks "this girl, whom Heaven willed that I should save—she whom I found dead at my feet—she whom we call Lady Melville—is, if God sends no ray of light to penetrate the darkness which surrounds me—she is the daughter of my husband and the Lady Buckingham!"

A cry escaped the lips of the trembling mother, and the duchess sank her fevered head upon the old lady's knee. She was too much

agitated to think of comforting her auditor, but went on hastily with her relation :—

“ The first glance of her features, even changed as they were by pain, disclosed to me such a resemblance to those of the beautiful Lady Buckingham, that I thought it was she herself; but a moment’s reflection satisfied me that time could not have stood still with her, and, besides, this lovely creature was quite young. An indescribable fear seized me. If it was not herself, it must be her daughter, was the first impulse, or rather misgiving, of my heart; and the never-subdued suspicion which had darkened my life was revived, and the belief that she was also *his* child, guided all my actions. My heart misgave me, and its forebodings were verified. When the women had undressed her, Morton brought me the ornaments which they had found upon her. I then for the second time beheld those bracelets which had been brought to me by the jeweller, and which it was impossible to mistake. Morton had also recognised them, but the kind-hearted woman respected my grief. As soon as she had left me, I opened a small portfolio, which she had also brought me. I found in it an unfinished letter, addressed to my husband, containing these words :—

“ ‘ Death overtakes me. Come and save our child, before she falls into the hands of my brother. Oh! why have I not the consolation of dying in your arms? Why have I vainly hoped for tidings from you?’

“ This letter appeared to have been written by one in a state of great weakness. Along with it were two drafts upon our banker, each for a thousand pounds. I retained the letter, for I considered that I had a right to this proof of his attachment. Had any other doubt now remained, Gaston would have dispelled it. He first discovered the lady, whom he recognised, and now he will not be kept apart from her. He saw her again, in my presence, after her illness, and she informed me that he had been the constant follower of the only two men who ever visited her aunt. Besides this, I sent Stanloff, upon whose fidelity I can rely, to the Lady Buckingham’s castle, and all that he there saw and heard agrees with the unhappy girl’s story. She fled from this castle. Yet, in spite of all

this, I had still hope for relief, in the thought that her uncle might be known to Lord Archibald. I devised plans to hear more respecting her birth, although suffering the most fearful torments lest our inquiries should bring the truth to light. Archibald instantly recognised her as the image of Lady Buckingham, and I perceived his astonishment. He felt that I had not been candid with him. But all this was as naught, when compared to the despair I feel at the news that Robert loves his sister, and desires her for his wife—thus breaking his earlier engagement to Lady Anna Dorset."

"Great God! what do you say, my child? My old head cannot understand it—my heart will break!" cried the old duchess, sinking back in the cushion.

"Compose yourself, my dear mother," said the duchess, with the impatience arising from her over-excitement, which prevented her from perceiving the intensity of her parent's sorrow: "compose yourself, mother: we must not part until we have decided upon something. I require all your courage, your strength, your circumspection. Robert has only now left me, after declaring his intentions. A long interview, in which he proved himself my superior, because I could not apprise him of the nature of my reasons for opposing the union, has only made the affair worse; and I see the most frightful thing in nature about to happen under my eyes, without having the power to forbid it."

The elder duchess endeavoured to regain her composure, but this was not so easy of attainment. Independent of the afflicting position of affairs at this moment, she was overwhelmed by the idea that the memory of her honoured and beloved son was darkened by a suspicion for which there were such ample grounds. But her strong mind soon found an outlet; and leaving the recollection of the past, which could not now be changed, she turned to the consideration of the present, in order to devise means for preventing the consequences of the wrong, and the commission of a fresh crime. Extending her cold hand to the duchess, she said, in a tone of resignation—

"First of all, my noble child, receive the assurance of my increased love and respect. In the midst of a life rich with many blessings, God has given thee a deep and fearful sorrow. Perhaps

it is a kindness to give us opportunity to exercise patience and generosity; and we will indulge the hope that God has been gracious to the guilty soul before him, for the sake of that undeniable goodness and nobleness which led even thee to pardon him. But as he requires us to stay the consequences of guilt, so you were quite right to call upon me for advice. We must not now yield to our feelings: we must look clearly into the future, in order to discharge with fortitude whatever duty God has appointed us to perform."

"Listen, then, to what I feel and have vowed," said the young duchess, with a firm voice. "I will never forsake the maiden whom I believe to be the child of him and that Lady Buckingham who was the first cause of my heart's struggle with evil. Everything of his is holy to me, even though nearly coupled with abhorrence. In dreams, his loving eye meets mine, and seems to implore protection for his orphan. I know that he relies upon the love of this faithful heart, in which he was never deceived; and I should have no peace if I forsook this dear girl, while she, in innocent hope, looks to others for protection. I will therefore be a mother to her, but the secret of her unhappy birth she shall never learn from me.

"It seems as if we should have no answer from Master Brixton. We cannot now expect it, after the time that has elapsed since our letter was sent to him, and we must desist from all further inquiries. I intended her to form one of my family circle, that she might be loved by my children as a sister. I wished further to secure to her the future, by giving her a just portion of my earthly possessions, and then wait patiently until the end arrives, hoping that God would provide her, in my place, with a lasting protector for her rare charms and noble soul. But how soon is this project destroyed. The plan I had formed, which would have spared us all much sorrow, now led us into increased misfortune. What can we do to remove Robert from her, without betraying the secret? He alone is to be considered; for Lady Melville, in thoughts and feelings as innocent as a child, perceives not the affection which Robert betrays in every word and look."

"So, then," replied the old duchess, "we will await the moment

when Robert gives me his intended confidence; and I will then, with all the earnestness which the subject justifies, give him my opinion respecting his union with Lady Anna. I should have done so, even had I not been aware of this dreadful secret; for I can show him letters from Lady Dorset, in which she speaks of this connexion as a settled thing. If this is not enough, we may hope something from the influence of Richmond, who, I am sure, will unite with us. Above all things, however, a separation is necessary. Robert cannot succeed in conquering his feelings if he remains with her, especially as the kind and friendly manner of the lady nourishes his affection; and even she may at last be awakened out of her security. I have heard that no greater danger exists for a noble-minded woman, than to perceive the love which she has unconsciously excited in a man: the gentleness which is given her to bless him, leads her to yield sympathy. I think my approaching departure offers a favourable opportunity of separating them. You will trust the maiden to me: I know that she is attached to me, and will willingly accompany me. Robert will, meanwhile, have to submit to what is unalterable; and when his peace and self-command shall have returned, you can bring him to Burton, where he will find reparation in Anna Dorset; or if you should consider that he is not sufficiently restored by that time, then keep him still longer from her."

"So let it be," said the duchess, breathing deeply, as if a burden had been taken from her. "Thus shall I remain true, and shall have succeeded in protecting the name of my husband from the reproach of his children. Yet if the present time be gained by this, we must not imagine that it will be the final struggle. It will now be said that we do not use sufficient zeal in discovering the relations of our guest. This cannot be avoided without great difficulty, especially as regards Archibald and Robert; and my mind revolts at the evasions so foreign to it, but which will, I fear, be necessary to conceal the truth. Say, can that be a right purpose which separates us from the truth? Does not this voice deceive me, which commands me, at the price of that holy thing, to protect my husband's most valuable possession—his honour, which is thus threatened after his death? What if I deceive myself—if the motive

which impels me be not quite pure—if it induces me to conceal my husband's attachment, in order to prevent myself being known as the scorned and forgotten one, who tried, with too well-known love, to chain the man who possessed her heart—mother, if this should be my motive?"

"It is more difficult than we think, my child, to control the motives of our acts, and to keep them free from selfishness. We cannot here attain that glorious state of mind which combines all that is right in deeds and thoughts; the mere capability of desiring this, seems only lent to us, to prevent our falling too far short of it. I therefore regard as natural your fear of being influenced by any inferior motive. The case which claims our attention may easily excite fears for the purity of our intentions: perhaps even God's goodness purposely excites within us such considerations, in order to preserve us from the security which corrupts us; for certainly those precautions which, with the best intentions, we are obliged to take for the deception of others, are a problem difficult to solve. Let us now separate: it seems to me that you need repose."

Both ladies attempted to rise, but the elder only quitted her seat. That excitement which, until now, had sustained the duchess, had lost its influence as her anxiety decreased; her physical exhaustion became great in proportion to the alleviation of her mind, and she sank back without a sound.

The old duchess now exercised all her presence of mind. Conquering her own emotion, she hastened to summon Morton; but the assistance of this faithful attendant was not sufficient, and Stanloff was sent for. He declared it to be a case requiring the greatest care and the strongest remedies, and he desired that she should be taken immediately to bed. For many hours she lay insensible; but at last, after the opening of a vein, she awoke from her torpor.

It had been impossible to conceal her condition from the inhabitants of the castle; and her children and Lord Archibald, who did not neglect to offer a measured sympathy, were speedily assembled in the room adjoining her chamber, awaiting the opinion of Stanloff, who, with the attendants, was busied in the invalid's apartment. The young duke was deadly pale; his lips were compressed; and

his agony showed itself in his features, as he struggled to suppress it. He appeared lost to all around him; he turned away from his sisters, who were weeping in Lady Melville's arms; and he had no eyes even for her. Lord Archibald sat by his afflicted mother, holding her cold hands in his; and, embarrassed by a scene in which he did not feel himself at ease, cast now and then an anxious glance on the old lady, who, in patience and resignation, awaited the decisive moment.

The evening had set in, and the forms rising only indistinctly out of the dark space, increased the depression of those who were watching. Lady Melville, at Stanloff's request, had just led the sisters away, when the curtains were drawn back. A manly figure entered, and, without being interrupted by those present, advanced with hasty steps to the bed of the duchess. He seized Stanloff's arm, and those who could see him guessed the questions which were asked. In the next moment he clasped the young duke to his heart.

"Richmond is come!" joyfully exclaimed Lord Archibald to his mother, who now raised her eyes, and beheld the two brothers in an embrace, which grief for their mother appeared to render nearly indissoluble.

"I have killed her, Richmond!" cried the duke. "I have brought new sorrow upon her already afflicted heart. I have taken my mother from you."

Incomprehensible as these words were to Richmond, he saw in them merely the alarm natural to the present moment, and he answered gently,

"Compose yourself, Robert. Stanloff assures me of her safety: he does not think her in danger. Let us send away all who are collected here; for Stanloff wishes her to be kept in perfect quiet, and none of them are in a condition to enable her to obtain it."

These words were suddenly interrupted by a sound from the bed, and the name of Richmond was pronounced in the gentlest tone of love. Instantly he knelt by the side of the duchess, who was gradually awaking from her death-like sleep, and her eyes, dimmed by weakness, sought the favourite. Her weak heart was revived

by his voice ; and the delicate traces of a smile, with which she strove to reward him, banished at least the remains of the struggle which had convulsed her features, though her attempt to speak succeeded only in pronouncing his name.

Stanloff, who was pleased to see this expression of feeling, hastened nevertheless to shorten it. The duchess consented to remain quiet, and Richmond disappeared through a well-known door which led to Morton's room.

Lord Archibald and Stanloff had much trouble to remove the young duke, who, incited by his anguish, wished to remain to assist the attendants. He finally yielded to the earnest words of his grandmother, who, resorting to unusual sternness, asked him whether that could be called love which made him, by an obstinate resistance, run the risk of doing harm ?

When the family returned to the saloon, each felt the depressed tone of the other so much, that displeasure yielded to compassion ; and these two, as well as the rest, looked anxiously towards the door, in the hope of Richmond's entrance : for him all hearts beat ; and the impatience of his sisters, who had been left by the Lady Mary, was raised to the highest degree. But they were compelled to defer, for the present, this demonstration of their affection ; for Otway now appeared, and, with the accustomed ceremonies, informed the old lady, in the absence of his mistress, of the approaching arrival of guests, whom two pages had been sent forward to announce.

The old duchess, seconded by the young duke, gave permission for the entrance of the pages, and Lord Archibald slipped off in search of Richmond, for whom he felt an impatient longing. He was anxious to quit this atmosphere of excited feelings, and to return to that cool empire of reason which was more consonant to his nature. But he was disappointed in his object ; for Richmond's heart, after it had once given way to its oppression, impelled him to discharge his duties towards the rest of the family, especially as he had communications to make respecting the approaching guests, whom he had passed on the road.

Entering the saloon by a door opposite to that at which the pages

appeared, he greeted those around him, and hastened to introduce these two young noblemen to his grandmother and his brother.

The youths then stepped forward, and thus addressed the lady:—

“Our master, the Earl Ormond, and his honourable companion, the Lord Membroke, have had the honour to be commissioned by his Royal Highness the illustrious Prince of Wales, to express his deepest sympathy in the affliction of the noble family of his ever lamented friend, the late Duke of Nottingham; and in this high capacity the lords, our masters, approach this castle, requesting through us, their pages of honour, a gracious reception.

The old duchess, turning to the young duke, replied—“Welcome these gentlemen, my grandson, in the name of your mother and your family. As regards myself, although I rejoice at the arrival of these distinguished lords, I stand so much in need of repose that I must for to-day deny myself the honour of making their acquaintance.”

She then bade farewell to all, and, attended by her granddaughters and their ladies, left the saloon.

The young duke dismissed the pages with flattering words. Sir Edward Ramsey, with a numerous suite, was sent to meet the travellers; whilst Otway, with a train of servants, hastened to prepare the rooms destined for their occupation.

The young duke was not in the mood to perform the duties of hospitality with that cheerfulness which assures the guests of a hearty welcome, and which cannot be superseded by any outward adherence to forms which lack their confirmation in the host's manner. Richmond, struck by his brother's appearance, now that they were left alone for a second time, begged him to be no longer uneasy respecting the health or life of his mother; for Stanloff, whom he had met on his way to the saloon, had assured him that the quiet and sweet sleep into which she had fallen would most probably lead to her perfect recovery, and that her situation was more perplexing than dangerous.

“Nevertheless, Richmond,” said the duke, “this occurrence fills me with regret, and throws me into a chaos of contending feelings.

I fear lest the wishes which I expressed a few hours ago, and which I maintained in spite of her opposition, have caused this painful attack, for she was previously exhausted by grief and sorrow for my poor father's death."

"How can that be?" inquired Richmond quickly: "I do not understand this. How can my affectionate mother find in your request, which may perhaps be somewhat annoying or difficult to grant, anything to cause such exhaustion as this, which is purely physical, and appears to me to be the result of her late affliction?"

"No, no," replied the duke. "She listened to the strongest wish of my heart with horror, and thereby made me the most unhappy man upon earth."

"I do not comprehend you, my dear brother," cried Richmond, roused from his composure, and perceiving that there was something concealed, which he did not understand. He paused, as if certain of receiving that confidence which his brother had never refused him. But this time it was not so: the duke was silent, and was so evidently embarrassed, that Richmond's attention was more strongly excited. He was about to ask him some question, in order to render the communication more easy, when the duke took his hand, and pressing it between his own, said, with a trembling voice,

"Be my protector, my mediator, between this heart and the world, which is at enmity with my feelings. Richmond, I love! This wonderful passion has seized me for the first time, and already have I met with opposition and persecution; although I defy the world to produce to me, out of its choicest treasures, an object more worthy to create this feeling."

"Robert," said Richmond, "what has happened? Tell me, what has now excited any dislike here to a connexion by which you would fulfil the wishes of your family, and which your later conduct has so confirmed that you are now looked upon by the others as their nearest relation."

"Good God!" cried the duke, pressing his forehead with his hands, and speaking with increasing vehemence, "what do you mean? To whom do you refer? Of what obligations do you avail yourself, in order to disappoint me of the consolation of your sympathy?"

Richmond, I do not mean Lady Anna! I do not love her. I have never excited her hopes, and she is quite indifferent to me. I do not therefore allude to her. The angel whom I love resides in this castle, and is the Lady Mary Melville, who was found by my mother on the terrace. Alas! it is from her, who was sent to us by a miracle, and who is formed to bless the heart of her son, that my mother now recoils, as if she would dishonour the place which I offer her in my affections."

"You, Robert!" exclaimed Richmond, whilst surprise was strongly depicted on his countenance: "you wish to make this unfortunate girl your wife! Is it possible, my dear brother? How completely has this unguarded feeling led you to overlook both the possibility and the desirableness of such a step. Forgive me," he added, advancing to the duke, who had turned away from him, "forgive me if I irritate you. Surely it cannot be that the voice of truth is no longer available between us? Let that never be." he added, with warmer affection; "never let opposite opinions cause silence between us. Do not, by turning away from me, Robert, make it more difficult for your dearest friend to be of service to you."

Robert could resist no longer. Affected by the melody of this beautiful and dear voice, he turned round, and cast his troubled eye upon his brother, whose features were so strongly marked by indications of compassion, that, overcome by the tenderness of his brother's heart, he embraced him, while he saluted him with a thousand endearing appellations.

"Yes, Richmond," he said, "I feel that I am unconscious of my own conduct. A few weeks ago, I knew nothing of this state; I even thought it impossible. But see Lady Melville yourself, and then you will be satisfied that she is worthy of the place I offer her."

Richmond almost shuddered. He was alarmed by the idea of seeing a nameless stranger (for thus, in his letters, had the earl described her,) in the place which had been filled through centuries by only the noblest women, from the most distinguished families of the country. He esteemed it a duty appertaining to the head of

his family, to guard himself against any affection which would invade his dignity, and it seemed to him unmanly to disregard this duty for the sake of a woman; for although he had a great respect for the sex, he honoured therein his mother and grandmother alone, and it was only their ripened character which pleased him. A young creature (for by this term he designated all the beautiful maidens in his own and foreign countries) seemed to him quite unworthy of exciting such devotion in a man. On one occasion, when jested with on the subject of marriage, he had expressed himself so strongly as to declare that he would rather marry his grandmother, than the most beautiful lady in England, under twenty years of age. A union based on perfect esteem appeared to him complete, for he did not fear the warm feelings of his heart being rebuked by the ripe age of his future wife. His angry grief for his brother was therefore so much the less to be censured, as Robert, less firm in his own opinion, and with the carelessness of one who thinks he has little responsibility, had heretofore entertained similar views, and thus awakened the hope that no danger of this kind was to be apprehended on his account.

The tender love which Richmond bore to him, and which had in it something of a protecting character, instigated him to cast the greater part of the blame in this affair on the strange lady. Her whole situation seemed so extraordinary, that it was impossible for him to regard her in any other than an equivocal light; and he even thought it imprudent and dangerous to admit this unknown personage into the circle at the castle, and to allow her free intercourse with his sisters. These thoughts arose more rapidly than we can express them; but they decided his answer, which he uttered with forbearance and firmness.

"Let me hope, Robert," he said, "that however this lady may be distinguished by nature's gifts, the sight of her will not shake those principles which we have both received from our honoured parents, and also from the unspotted virtues of our ancestors. What avails the memory of a noble race, were it not for the remembrance of their virtues, which warns their descendants not to destroy the purity, the unspotted purity, of their name? You," continued he,

becoming more earnest, "with your fair locks and blue eyes, are born a Nottingham, and in your face are portrayed the features of our first ancestor, in testimony that his virtues are also there. Will you, then, be the first to graft on the tree of our female ancestors, a nameless and equivocal, although a beautiful branch? Say what you will, I do not believe you would thus act. I trust to your better self—to your firm, manly soul. You will conquer. The feelings of the heart may sometimes exercise tyranny over us ; but where is the manly breast that does not feel supported against the power that threatens us? Let us together consider the subject : deprive me not, at all events, of that pleasure."

"Richmond," answered the duke, "this is the only thing I can promise you. But I still hope to lead you over to my opinion, as you have often gained me to yours. I only repeat once more—see her first!"

"I certainly find the justification of your feeling in her beauty and amiability, for the ignoble and common could never seduce you. Yet I shall never find in her the justification of a wish, which leads you to overstep the bounds of justice towards her, and which renders you blind to the duties which you owe to the family of Dorset, none of whom ever doubted their fulfilment. You, my dearest friend, did not hesitate yourself, until this unfortunate maiden had changed your natural right feeling."

The duke was silent, and appeared inexpressibly distressed. There is no feeling which gives rise to such cruel contradictions as that of love: it divides us, as it were, into two contending parties; and whilst affection appears, with increasing demands, to possess a holy and indisputable right to overthrow all that opposes it, there is often, to our great torment, a strong faculty of perceiving the difficulties which surround us.

It was thus with the young duke. He was obliged to confess that his brother had only reminded him of what he had before perceived; but the love to which he so entirely yielded himself, exercised a power over him which could not be called otherwise than overwhelming

Richmond marked the hesitating look of the duke, as betokening

mental indecision. His prudence, as well as his confidence, made him expect the completion of the one affair, in the breaking off of the other.

Both brothers now betook themselves to the discharge of those duties, which the arrival of guests imposed upon them.

CHAPTER XIII.

We are, for some time, about to take the reader out of the family circle with which he is already acquainted, in order to prepare him for events in another place, in which the Nottingham family is concerned; and at the same time to give some explanation of the occurrences mentioned in the close of the preceding chapter, as having happened some time previous.

At the period of the return of the Prince of Wales from Spain, Whitehall was the abode of the king; and in the neighbourhood of the palace were the dwellings of those nobles who regarded themselves as exclusively entitled to surround their monarch, and to form a barrier between him and the people. However necessary this might have been in earlier times, the better spirit which now began to be diffused throughout all classes, rendered it superfluous. The nation anxiously watched these privileges and distinctions; and perhaps the more anxiously, because a dull perception might obtrude itself here and there among the mass, that the people were worthy of a closer union with their sovereign. The nobility having given themselves up to licentiousness, their moral strength was impaired; they were, moreover, disunited among themselves, pursuing their dissensions even to the steps of the throne, and old habits alone retained for them their privileges. This licentiousness was imitated by the mass of the people, who, with greater patience than their penetration promised, favoured these privileges, because there lay in the spirit of the nation, conscious of its history, an inspiring and unredeemable gratitude towards names with which were

associated recollections of the glories of their country. Thus may be explained how the exalted name of a family long remains a banner of protection to its degenerate descendant, under which he may continue to enjoy inherited privileges which he would never have been able to win for himself.

Elizabeth, the most proud and jealous ruler, had already endeavoured to break through the boundary with which her haughty nobility sought to encompass her throne; and in her desire to elevate the citizens to their proper place, wherever she met with talent in their class, she honoured it with her personal favour. A support was by this means prepared among the middle classes of her people, who found, with already developed strength, aim and direction for their efforts; and at the same time secured for her a more independent position on the throne. Before the nobility, in their highly cultivated nature, were aware of this power thus rising against them, they were taught by it to feel that they must defend their privileges with something more than long possession.

But towards the end of the reign of King James, it was hardly possible to discover any of the ordinances of that royal woman, in the form in which she bequeathed them to her successor. The mechanism of a state, if well arranged, proceeds in its operation undisturbed, long after the guiding hand has failed which imparted its original activity. It was this continued action among the citizens, that in a great degree inspired them with self-satisfied confidence, since they felt themselves in possession of blessings which they had long ago desisted from attempting to secure for their descendants.

James possessed much learning, but it led to no valuable results, and only filled him with the ridiculous vanity which weak minds hold to be justified by the exertions which their learning has cost them, and which gives to their acquirements an over-prized worth. How poor are such minds, when compared with the fertility of true genius! The weak nature of James, debased by education and circumstances, had no strength to be quickened by the high position to which the death of Elizabeth called him. Destitute of real strength, he was as little capable of being a tyrant as a benefactor to his people. The plaything of others, he possessed so few individual

ideas, that these remained to him uncontested, for they only served to render his indecision more conspicuous.

Thus the condition of citizen and social life underwent a transformation. The nobility very soon reclosed the access which Elizabeth had given to merit; and without rivalry with these upstarts, without rousing themselves to a higher development, and restrained by James's peaceful policy from every warlike exercise, they only too speedily relapsed into the savage extravagance out of which they had scarcely begun to raise themselves. An ancient name, riches, personal beauty, supplied the place of those qualities which Elizabeth had valued. The consequences were, a succession of favourites, whose haughtiness and licentiousness towards the people—yes, even towards their equals, and before the face of the king—went unpunished. The middle class, pressed down within its earlier limits, either gave up its onward progress, or devoted itself to this without any thought of higher duties; and the only condition which seemed to reap advantage from this state of affairs was the handicraft class, which, called into more active exertion by the increased wants of the imperious nobles, drew from thence great profits, and in outward show far exceeded the subdued middle classes.

The modest and grave demeanour, which had characterized the manners of the nobility in the time of Elizabeth, had also gradually disappeared. Uproar and disquiet often pervaded a whole street, or even an entire district of the city, in which a feast among the nobility took place; and when the procession of the guests, with their countless tribe of servants, pages, and retainers, passed by to the place of meeting, the shops were frequently shut, whilst the modest women and maidens concealed themselves, and the principal doors which protected them were guarded by armed men. These noisy meetings, spreading disorder every where, too often favoured the criminal designs, which, undertaken with power, yielded only to power, and which, being unpunished by the authorities, gave rise to petty wars, too often to the detriment of the lower classes. These latter played the part of children, given up to the sensuality and ill-treatment of their superiors. The nobleman of the most beauti-

ful figure, who wore the finest clothes, who owned the most costly servants, and the most distinguished followers, was sure to be hailed with shouts of applause wherever he went. One might have supposed that the nobles endeavoured, with great trouble, to attract this attention; for they exercised their coxcombical extravagance in a thousand ways to increase the good-humour of the people, who were delighted to see the actions of celebrated and elevated persons brought so near to them; whilst the honest and educated burghers turned away with shame and disgust.

On the day when we lead our readers into London, a fiery sea of torches lighted the court of a handsome house, throwing its glare into the adjoining streets, and brightening the dark fog with which the sky was veiled. A stranger might have imagined himself near a burning city, when he heard from afar the tumultuous cries of the crowd which pressed to this spectacle, partly as spectators, partly as guests. It was one of the feasts above mentioned.

The Duke of Buckingham this day first collected together the nobility of the country after his return from Spain. His invitation was gladly received; for the power and favour of this dreaded man seemed to be doubled by the acknowledged friendship of the prince, which appeared to give promise of his unhappy rule, even after the death of the present king. His numerous enemies, among whom were reckoned the most worthy persons of the nation, abandoned the hope of seeing an end to his corrupting influence; and, subsequently, Charles I. could not have ascended the throne under a more inauspicious star than his friendship for a man, who, in the eyes of the whole nation, was the cause of all the evil by which it was visited. But at the period of which we speak, his influence was invulnerable, and this was not the moment for resisting it. The best saw this, equally with the worst; and both yielded to circumstances, but with this difference, that it seemed to the one a patriotic sacrifice, whilst the other sought to protect himself and his gains.

Buckingham was acquainted with all his enemies. Countless spies were placed at important posts, and this shameful service was rewarded with a profuseness which ensured further claims. That

each spy might be punctual in his service, a second held unknown watch over him; and as Buckingham knew how to punish treachery, the members of these bands whispered their intelligence with fear. The punishment of a word, justified by the confusion of the land, often reached its noble and angry author in the retirement which he had chosen in preference to the glare of the court; and the mistrust which spread itself into the heart of society, leaving no unity of opinion or coalition of views, was one of the diabolical aims of Buckingham, which he easily attained. It was a part of his mean pleasures to invite to his feasts all those who bore him ill-will. He knew that they would rather have undertaken a campaign than the road to his palace, and he rioted in the delight of seeing them constrained to bow in his presence. On such occasions they had to bear all his dark haughtiness, and were alternately the objects of his childish teasings, and of his coarsest neglect. Women of doubtful reputation reigned as queens of the feast, where the noblest and most distinguished ladies were obliged to submit to their tempers and wishes. Yet these noble ladies would sooner have ventured to absent themselves from the court of the queen than from the chambers of Buckingham; for who had not a husband, a son, a brother, or a father to protect from him? and who could say whether he would overlook or pardon such a neglect?

On the above evening the brilliant rooms were already filled with distinguished persons, from the country and abroad. The most lovely women, dressed in the most costly apparel; the men, with all that could render them distinguished; and a countless suite of pages and servants filling the ante-rooms. All crowded together, and sought, by courtesy or favour, to attain that place which appeared to belong to their rank or station.

But although the greater part of the guests had arrived, and the hour was late, the host, who alone could unite the many contradictory elements which these halls contained, was still missing. It was easy to perceive, that, in consequence of the long delay imposed upon the guests, which was regarded as a new presumption and annoyance on the part of the haughty man, the cheerfulness or quiet dignity with which the thinking part of the company had

armed themselves for his appearance, gave way to a mingled feeling of weariness and astonishment. The thoughtless youth alone were, as usual, noisy, and by their jests interrupted the groups of those who were brought together by similarity of thought. Vainly did the numerous partisans and private acquaintances of the duke endeavour to infuse life into this dull company; but he himself only could remove the burden which sunk more and more heavily upon all. Even the Marchioness of Saint Pol, who, in the height of favour, appeared as queen of the feast and under whose direction Buckingham had arranged everything there, gave way to the ill-temper which this neglect caused, and discontinued the efforts with which she had hitherto supported the duke's friends. The company having no common interest, pursued their own amusements, which were perhaps more attractive to the crowd. Yet were there enough among those present, who, with suspicious hatred, prophesied the increased importance of the favourite, in consequence of this new insult towards the high nobles collected there, including the minister, and those most nearly connected with the king. Others, again, thought over their offences against him, asking themselves in terror how they had earned this neglect; whilst the noblest and best were angry and ashamed at finding themselves in a place which condemned them to such vexation. Although each moment becoming more conscious that their best feelings required them to depart, they feared to do so, lest they should call down upon themselves and their friends a persecution which no human power could allay.

Thus, from the various interests, arose a general desire for the presence of the duke; to which the young people assented in the hope of the dancing being commenced, and the hungry in the longing for the pleasures of the table. But this wish was still disappointed; and the annoyance of the proud English barons was increased by the presence of the foreign nobles, whom France and Spain maintained at the court of the king in considerable numbers, and with great expense, and whom Buckingham had invited to give grandeur to his feast. These now saw the chief personages of the kingdom apparently bow before the rude negligence of a man, whose unbounded arrogance they appeared to acknowledge. The Spanish noble-

men, at whose head was the young and handsome Duke of Salamanca, after consideration of the circumstances, awaited the originator of the insult with a grave and cold demeanour, and the young duke, who was not insensible to the blonde beauties of England, now conducted himself as merely the ambassador of Spain.

Totally different was the behaviour of the French lords. These appeared in their own lively character, seeming not to notice the insult offered to them and the whole collected company, or to regard it as a lively jest of the amiable duke. In their circle was an individual whose dress betokened a priest, and whose insignificant figure and reserved manners might have made him pass without notice, had he not been the object of great attention to his companions, who did not cease annoying him, rather than amusing him with questions, speeches, and communications. His broad brown face, at fault in all its proportions, moved not when he spoke; his deep sunk eyes, besides their smallness, were half closed and nearly invisible; and his wide mouth, when opened by a quick passing smile, showed two rows of ugly teeth, which never discovered themselves in speaking. The Earl of Salisbury was observed to approach him, and greet him with the respect which he was accustomed to bestow only in political matters. This instantly decided the importance of the apparently insignificant man. He followed the earl, in order to be introduced to several persons, and it was soon discovered that he had but just arrived from France. Even Lord Membroke, the companion of Buckingham, and quite as haughty as his patron, hastened to pay his respects, a rare circumstance with him. The wonderfully quick and striking manner in which the stranger regarded the cavalier, showed that his little eyes had some expression; whilst the polite demeanour, and yet cool reserve, with which he received him as an acquaintance, evinced, for the first time, a degree of pride which would scarcely have been anticipated from his former appearance. Lord Membroke appeared to heed this but little, and endeavoured to engage his whole attention, when Lord Saville whispered something which made his colour change, and he abruptly left the circle.

An indescribable smile of contempt passed over the face of the stranger. His eye followed for a moment the direction in which Lord Membroke hastened; while an unknown person whispered a word to him, which he answered with a slight inclination of the head. If the arrival of the stranger had, for a time, absorbed the attention of a portion of the company, they all soon returned to the annoying feeling of insult, which increased with each succeeding hour, and was not lessened by the assurance that the duke was still at court; as every one knew that the court was dependent on Buckingham, and not Buckingham on the court. The disquiet and vexation had reached even the servants in the entrance-hall, when the acting equerry suddenly entered the court, ordered the guards to be under arms, and immediately the duke's carriage, with its long desired master, arrived. His first movement was to beckon silence to the porter, who was about to thunder forth his arrival; and instead of ascending the staircase to the company, he motioned to the servants, who preceded him, to lead the way by a back staircase to his private apartments.

Maxwell, the chamberlain of the duke, regarded his master with alarm, when, in disordered garments, with thoughtful mein, and without noticing the surrounding servants, he hastened through his half-lighted chambers to his bedroom, as if he scarcely knew the direction of his steps. Maxwell foresaw some strange event; and resolving not to permit the knowledge of it to go further, he removed, on his own authority, the officious persons around. He found, on entering the sleeping-room, that the duke had thrown off his upper clothing, and wrapped himself in a large silk mantle, in which, as signified by Maxwell, he lay down on his bed. Maxwell, who regarded this as a preparation for a fresh toilette, hastened to prepare for the duke's choice his most costly dresses, expecting with increasing impatience the first word of the ill-tempered man, who, meanwhile, with half-closed eyes, and half dreaming, did not seem to notice his servant's movements. Then passing quickly from one extreme to the other, he hastily jumped up, and inquired, with impatience amounting to anger, for a small chest which Lord Saville was to have delivered. This was placed before him, and its insignificant

appearance but little justified the boundless delight with which he pressed it to his breast and lips.

With Maxwell's assistance, the duke removed one covering after another with sharp instruments, until at length a purple silk cloth, embroidered with golden lilies, met his eye. He pushed away Maxwell's hands, in order to cover it with the tenderest caresses, which he now discontinued to draw forth a box covered with scarlet velvet and gold, and which, being quickly opened, displayed the picture of a lady, most splendidly attired.

We forbear to describe the outbreak of that passionate love which Buckingham seemed to feel. Maxwell, accustomed to such scenes, thought with a mocking smile of the Marchioness de Saint Pol, who had yesterday been the object of expressions which were now bestowed upon an inanimate picture and a silk cloth. Being too well acquainted with these cases to wish to divert the duke's attention before his feelings had exhausted themselves, and knowing well enough that this would not require a great degree of patience, he withdrew behind the screen of magnificent clothes, accompanying every exclamation of the duke with a smile of mockery and contempt.

But the duke appeared this time to unite the prevailing affair of love with thoughts of a more earnest nature. There seemed a contention in his mind, to which he was accustomed only when doubting which was the most advantageous, the becoming or the pleasurable. The balance inclined to the absent object, the original of the charming picture; and he broke into many godless oaths to resign every other interest in the world for the possession of this which now engrossed him.

"What comical dreams of a sentimental boy world," added he, laughing, "are these so-called ties of nature! And exist they still here? Shall I now sacrifice the pleasure of seeing her again to an unknown being, whose existence was concealed from me when it when it might have been of service? This boy Charles, who cherished the silly idea of keeping from me a foolish secret, and had the boldness, deserving of punishment, actually to accomplish it! Shall I proffer assistance to their plans after they have been de-

stroyed, and, with them, the greatest happiness which smiles in thee, heavenly picture! The decision is not difficult, and it is made!" cried he, with a yelling voice, which spoke the horror of an appealing conscience.

He sank back upon his pillow; and as he threw aside with violence the box with the picture, the lid quickly separated, and disclosed to him a delicately-written sheet of paper, surrounded with coloured silk. But he was obliged to defer the happiness of learning its contents; for after a short bustling noise in the anteroom, and the quarrelling of attendants, Sir John Saville entered, followed even to the threshold by the servants.

Maxwell, joyful at a circumstance which must interrupt the state of the duke, now become tedious, quickly closed the door behind the intruder, and listened curiously to the movements of both.

But the duke did not appear at all disposed to receive kindly the bold proceeding of his friend. "And may I ask," said he, stretching himself upon his cushion, and looking angrily at him, "what Lord Saville means by the pleasant familiarity upon which he is pleased to presume? Have my servants committed the blunder of summoning your grace? If so, I beg you to show me the fool who instigated you now to announce yourself, when I wish to be alone. Will your grace either answer, or leave me?"

"The first is not necessary," replied Saville in a rough voice, "and I intend to do the last only in your company. It surpasses the bounds of possibility to speak of the insult which is heaped at this moment, not only upon myself, but upon all the dukes, earls, and barons, including the great worthies of the church of the three united kingdoms, covering them with shame and affront, and reducing your best friends to despair, under the torture of a useless and contemptuous show of politeness."

"Your grace," interrupted Buckingham, without anger, and pulling at the silken threads of the covered-up letter, "people in London talk of malignant fevers, which cause instantaneous confusion of the brain. Or have you been too frequent in your visits to the sideboard? Or have the week's nightly feasts made you a day dreamer? I am much concerned at your hazardous condition

Maxwell, where are you, inactive wretch, whilst my best friend finds himself in so miserable a situation? A chair! Open his doublet! Where are the holy drops of Mother Kleratri, which are unfailing against death, even on the airy gallows of timely justice? Or are you fasting, my lord, and have missed your dinner through over-diligent study? How learned people become by hunger. I desire your company. Maxwell, covers! Let the dinner be served up, if any fire burns upon the hearth of this miserable bachelor's hotel."

"pare your wretched jokes," cried Saville, angrily. "Think not to deceive me. You know very well that you hurried your servants throughout the whole of London, with invitations to hold a court to-day at your house, at which the highest and most important persons of the realm should offer the homage of their forced respect. You know also that you have the revolting shamelessness to leave this party for four hours without a host. You know that by this you create more enemies than I can reckon, whilst you lay like a child in your silken swaddling-clothes, and pull silk! But all will find its level, and you may expect consequences from this fête more numerous than the hairs on your head. The foremost of those who threaten you is the Marchioness of Saint Pol, the queen of the day. This feast, which, by every art of persuasion, you forced upon her acceptance as a favour, she now regards as an open affront. The circle of retreating ladies, who at the commencement surrounded her as her suite, becomes wider, casting colder looks upon her; for one as little dares to despise those whom Buckingham honours, as one thinks of protecting those whom he abandons. But all have one and the same burden of insult, and all have the same wish as the marchioness—to revenge themselves, and then to depart. The company is divided into parties, the minister Salisbury at the head. The Earls of Cumberland, Sussex, Clifford, Somerset, and Clarendon, stand as principals, ruling with angry looks the followers collected around them. The Scottish barons and Irish peers gaze with astonishment at the scene before them, and at the humiliation of their proud English neighbours, and then take their part as much as their weak feelings of honour permit; whilst the bishops, deans, and

chaplains, the angry glow of whose noses might roast your capons, walk about, expecting the pleasing scent of your table in vain. Up, silly man!" continued Saville, falling back into the displeasure out of which he had almost talked himself: "up! and hasten to repair this, while it is yet possible."

But, instead of an answer, immoderate laughter burst from the duke; so violent, so prolonged, and so unrestrained, that Saville, whose superficial character was incapable of maintaining an opinion of any kind against the magnificent and haughty Buckingham, at last sank into a chair opposite to him, and joining in the laughter of the duke, was scarcely able to resume his gravity, when Buckingham began to dry his tearful eyes.

"Saville! prince of all the merry jokers of my frivolous household, I claim no merit for the delightful jest you have described to me. What feast could the exhausted treasury of thy ducal friend procure, that would yield an hundredth part of the pleasure which this, thy incomparable description of my guests, has given me? Truly, I am as much refreshed by it as if I had bathed in ether: my nerves have regained elasticity, and this exhausted life appears yet worthy of the dedication of one thought. Oh, the enchanting sight! To have humbled these proud companions, assembled like schoolboys in their Sunday clothes! To imagine their powerless thought of revenge, which none have courage enough to prosecute, even in my absence! These haughty ladies, who vainly lay aside their shell of virtue to do homage to my little favourite, and who now see themselves undeceived! Cease laughing, poor empty head! and tell me if it be possible that thou or I, or any man on earth, could have devised so charming a pleasure as is here produced by accident?"

"Oh, thou incomparably amiable villain!" cried Saville, struggling with his laughter, "how have you turned this tragic event into mirth, and thus cooled the high current of my anger? Yes, it is true, Buckingham: they walk about with stupid faces; and we, with Membroke, Corke, and Norris, have put our gloves between our teeth to avoid laughing openly at their wretched grimaces. But, nevertheless, I tell you it was a heavy jest for us, thy masters of the

revels. I thought they would have bearded us in return for every civility we paid them, especially since the arrival of the Spanish grandees, who, with their boy of a duke at their head, think themselves insulted, and surpass all the rest in ill-temper, from the idea of being disgraced in a foreign country. The French lords alone are amiable."

"What say you?" interrupted Buckingham, springing from the couch: "the French lords. Are they present? How could I forget that? Clothes, Maxwell—where are you? quick! Off, Saville! return to the saloon! I will follow instantly. I only change my clothes—I was by the bed of the Prince of Wales, who is very ill, and desired my attendance. On! on! spread this news in every corner of the saloon, and send Membroke to me. Some others may wait in the ante-room."

"Membroke! Membroke! Do you know what you say?" cried Saville, in astonishment. "Can you prove the illness of the prince? Can you repair one folly by committing another?"

"Miserable prattler! do you dare to regulate my mind with your stupid thoughts?" cried Buckingham angrily. "Hasten to perform my commands, that my own hand may not drive you from the room. In an instant Membroke must be here. Begone, or I crush you!"

"I go," said Saville, grumbling, and without hastening himself. "But you may doubt whether Membroke will come, for just now he was the very humble servant of a broad-shouldered French priest, who arrived to-day, and is among the French lords."

Buckingham stood as if struck by lightning: his eyes stared from his head, and a flush quickly overspread his pale face.

"Who is it? What is the name of the person you mean?" exclaimed he, seizing Saville by both his shoulders: "speak, by all the devils! What is the name of him whom you call a priest?"

"Release me," said Saville, shaking off the duke. "You have tormented me enough to-day. Inquire yourself; or ask Membroke, who knows him. He is a reverend, and his name Max—Mas—"

"Mazarin?" cried Buckingham, in distraction.

‘ It may be so,” said Saville, already in the ante-room ; and the door closed violently between them.

‘ But Mazarin !” This name burst repeatedly from the lips of the suddenly changed duke, as if he would convince himself of the reality of the sound. Having thrown himself into a chair, he seemed to have forgotten everything but this sound, and Maxwell did not venture to complete the half-ended toilet. But this outward stillness did not long continue: the opening door displayed the handsome, elegant form of Lord Membroke, the dissolute, unprincipled friend of Buckingham. Notwithstanding his pride and his ancient name, the limited property and boundless extravagance of this nobleman had rendered him little better than an upper hireling of the duke ; and although the graces of his person had alone obtained for him an importance which he was desirous of maintaining, his connexion with Buckingham was rendered more indispensable by the pecuniary embarrassments of a man of the world.

“ Mazarin ?” cried Buckingham, as soon as he saw Membroke ; and rousing himself from his reverie, he hastened to him.

“ Yes,” answered the earl, with a hasty glance towards the bed, on which lay the contents of the box, “ and, as I perceive, the messenger of pleasant gifts. Little does he suspect that he thus serves you as a lacquey ; and I must admire the delicacy of that loving, womanly heart, which conveys to you, by the object of your envy, all that can make you happy at a distance. What is it that gives you this power over the proudest women ? Send me to Germany, my lord : perhaps that land still contains such magic. I know them all, and have so thoroughly practised all the scenes which one plays through with them, that I forego them through satiety.”

The torpor partially disappeared from Buckingham’s features, as he listened to Membroke’s words.

“ Thou hast now called up the rising demons in this breast, and released me from the rage and despair of envy,” cried he at last. Ah, this abominable monster—this outrage to the human form ! And this master-piece of creation—this woman, clothed in every beauty, every magic, by which the most glorious mind may animate the most lovely form ! Who could have imagined even an acquaintance

between them, without suggesting that which is a mockery of the whole order of nature? And yet—and yet, Membroke—yet I doubt, and tremble to behold my rival in him.”

“Because you prefer to tremble—because the victory appears to you too easy, unless there are difficulties to be overcome, and the all-conquering Buckingham would rather have a baboon, than no rival at all. Let the ill-temper pass away, which, having no foundation in reality, suits not either you or your goddess. Do not, in the blindness of your zeal, vainly pursue a phantom, whilst he who causes your apprehensions meanwhile attains the real object, perhaps without opposition. Commit not the double folly of fearing a dismissed rival. Discover, rather, what this sneaking prelate has to do in England. Doubtless he has some other business than to deliver this picture, this handkerchief, and this exaggerated letter.”

“Ha, Membroke, you are right: your ever-pregnant reason excels mine. I am a foolish careless boy. How could I suppose that the friend and confidant of Richelieu should tread this soil without spreading a snare in which I shall be caught? Whom did I leave there, to send me intelligence of the game of that intriguer? Who was it? Who remained behind? Who has ventured to serve me so badly, as to allow this demon to enter the palace without my even being aware of his arrival? Here, under my roof, Membroke, before I knew anything of it! Do you understand? I—Buckingham—deceived, overreached! Who devised this villany? Who has dared to play me such a trick? As true as I live, and bear a name before which the world trembles, it shall be his last!”

Frightfully disfigured by rage, his hands trembling on the handle of his sword, which he had snatched from Maxwell; his eyes, eager to seek the object of his wrath, fell upon the brilliant and beautiful figure of the earl, who leaned against the mantel-piece, and, with the coldness of superiority and indifference, appeared regardless of all but himself. Without looking at the duke, he exhorted him to be calm.

“You can well understand,” continued he, “that you must not in any way betray your surprise to the cardinal. Hasten to throw yourself upon him as his protector before any others step in. Salis-

bury has already bowed his stiff back before the friend of the great Richelieu, and Clarendon and Sussex await his words. You must outdo them: watch him so diligently, that he will have no room to breathe freely; you can then observe him so much the more safely. Now let us hasten to the company. Maxwell, do your duty. See, this is an ill-chosen girdle for that masterpiece of a doublet and mantle; this faint turquoise jewellery does not suit this peach-coloured velvet. Why not wear these emeralds, which are far more suitable? This is the newest mode: see, they wear the tassel on the shoulder, under the clasp of the cloak, like this. Buckingham, thou ideal of fashion! thou cynosure of all eyes! must I instruct thee? Maxwell, take him to an hospital: his senses are gone! But tell me, has Saville shaken my nerves for nothing, by telling me that the prince has had a fit?"

"I hope he only told you this foolishness to bring you out of the room," replied Buckingham, "but it is only too certain that I have unwillingly left my guests without a banquet. The prince was suddenly taken ill. The king howls like a child by his bedside, and it was not without difficulty that I made my escape. I came only to disperse this crowd of guests, and then I must return. I have forgotten much that I have heard to-day, and, above all, about this casket—ha! and the bearer of it! Say, is Ormond there? He plays the part of Joseph, and that in a masterly manner. Therefore," continued Buckingham, laughing, "I have chosen him for your companion. Do not be surprised. You shall follow me to Whitehall, and shall pass the night there: I have much to tell you. Now let us go: I am as cold, quiet, and composed as if I had had twelve hours' sleep. These proud lords will have suffered too much, in their five hours' vexation, to permit themselves to be appeased by my, alas! too well-grounded excuses: this is my consolation. I would not willingly have deprived myself of the pleasure of thus annoying them. I must now entangle this Mazarin. But for this, I would rather have made verses to the moon than appear amongst them."

CHAPTER XIII.

A few hours after the occurrences just narrated, we find the individual whose name had so agitated Buckingham, sitting in a little turret-room in the French ambassador's house. His appearance as the friend of Richelieu procured him the favour of all those who knew how to estimate the power of the French minister, which was now at its height. Mazarin's manner appeared but little fitted to support this distinction, and still less did it give any indication of the power which was greater than that of any crowned head in Europe, and which rendered all obedient to his plans. His plain dress made him more liable to be overlooked, for nature had gifted him with little beauty; and he thought it advisable, at present, to conceal, under this half-priestly dress, that athletic figure which had earlier been developed by military service, and to veil that grace, which afterwards was so renowned, in the manners and address of a plain modest man.

Notwithstanding this, Buckingham knew his extraordinary influence. They had met in France, on a field in which Mazarin had resolved to maintain himself at any price, and where Buckingham had neither expected to meet with an antagonist in that form, nor had intended to yield. Although this power, which Mazarin gradually acquired in silence, remained a secret from the world, yet the relation in which he stood to Richelieu secured for him, in whatever country of Europe he might appear, a distinction far exceeding his outward position. Perhaps fear was mingled with the attention of which he was the object, for Richelieu made use of him to carry out plans, which were confided only to his ear, and the little flattering missions on which he was sent, either in the name of the great minister, or of his king, frequently obtained for Richelieu such a clear insight into the secrets of foreign courts, that he speedily discovered the extraordinary power of his messenger, and resolved to keep him in the best possible humour, for he was too

unskilled in all the general politeness of courts to make him harmless.

Richelieu was, at this time, in great fear respecting the return of the Prince of Wales, and was so delighted to hear of his arrival, that he dispatched Mazarin to offer to James the congratulations of the French court. Although all who heard of this compliment were delighted with the apparent sympathy and friendship displayed by this omission, yet there were not wanting those who secretly inquired to what it tended. Mazarin instantly perceived the impression that his arrival produced; but his quick penetration and perfect knowledge of mankind was veiled under so much gentleness and patience, that every fear was allayed, and he began to put his plans into execution while he was looked upon as an indifferent person.

Mazarin had conquered all his social inclinations and tastes, and this served to develop still more strongly his peculiar character. His long clerical robe was now thrown over a chair, and his open breast and wide shoulders were advantageously displayed by a waistcoat of violet-coloured silk, embroidered in gold. According to the taste of the time, and with a careful avoidance of very comical exaggeration, the rest of his person was clad in the same colour. A gold chain was hung round his neck, and fastened to his waistcoat. The clasp of this led one to suppose that it held something of peculiar value, for it was a diamond of unusual size and brilliance.

At the extremity of the room, two pages were engaged in unpacking the various gold and silver utensils, which, at that time, were to be found in every travelling equipment; and their careful avoidance of noise betokened that Mazarin, who was engaged in writing a letter, did not wish to be disturbed. It was impossible that the subject of this letter should be a grave one, for the cheerfulness which appeared upon his features almost amounted to a smile; and the unconcern with which he from time to time looked up, and cast his eyes on a little door opposite to him, plainly indicated that the letter was not only pleasant but easy to write.

An almost imperceptible noise was heard. Mazarin arose, and

walked to the pages, who, having finished their task, were silently awaiting his commands.

"Thank you, my friends," said he, kindly. "I shall only require Benville, who may wait in the ante-room till I call him, Good night: you will not have long to wait for sleep, after such a fatiguing day's journey. God bless you."

The boys knelt to kiss the hand which he had laid on their curling hair. He watched them till the door of the ante-room closed after them; and then the feeling with which he had blessed these two sleepy boys, and sent them to rest, changed into melancholy. But his feelings were always completely under his control. He would only acknowledge their existence in so far as they were useful to him in attaining his purpose; and it was his first rule of life, merely to stand by as spectator of their demands. He had, undeniably, gained influence over others by his coolness. Meanwhile, whether it were possible entirely to withdraw himself from their control—whether, while watching those of others, he did not foster his own—whether that creating love, which never loses sight of any one of its gifts, would allow one of the most beautiful of them to be suppressed, remains uncertain; for who, instead of fearing their suppression, does not rather believe that it is simply permitted to us to preserve the exterior calm, while the little hearth around which the feelings, like household gods, maintain their places, remains still the same; and that, though they are sometimes doomed to silence, and sometimes produce sociability and communicativeness among us, yet that they ever, in some shape or other, bear testimony to their indestructible nature. We will take the present moment as a confirmation of this opinion, for it may be the only opportunity afforded us by this great man. He returned immediately to that expressionless repose which often placed his enemies and observers in despair. He rung the little bell which lay on his table, the door opposite opened, and an old man, wrapped in a cloak, entered, and, on beholding Mazarin, sank at his feet.

"May you be blessed!" said he in a low tremulous voice.

"Glory to God in the highest," answered Mazarin, in a solemn tone,

and laying his hand on the old man's head, "Rise, Porter," he continued, gravely; "we must not be agitated, although it is long since we last met; but though this bodily eye could not reach you, my spiritual eye continually watched you, and saw a faithful servant in the name of the Lord, and of our holy order."

Porter, who has been already mentioned as chamberlain to the Prince of Wales, rose, and revealed his small slight figure, attired in a gray dress, without any marks of distinction. His long pale face expressed gloomy gravity; a few white hairs were thinly scattered on the narrow forehead, and his melancholy blue eyes were sunk on the ground. Mazarin, guided by circumstances well known to himself, soon penetrated the state of the old man's mind, and endeavoured to cheer and strengthen his heart."

"What do I see, old friend?" said he. "These white hairs and this bent back have preceded your years."

Porter raised his eyes with a deep sigh, and they remained fixed for a moment on Mazarin's muscular form. He then said, with an expression of grief, "Time does not pass over every one, without leaving its traces."

"Say no more," said Mazarin, who felt these words as a reproach. "Heaven can wonderfully fortify those who are true and obedient in their difficult calling, and who are in need of special strength."

"Yes, truly," answered Porter: "the Lord gives to each their proportion, and I murmur not that he appears to have fixed mine lower; for my life is a useless and heavy struggle between two holy duties, which I can never succeed in uniting, and to which I therefore become equally useless and unprofitable."

"To wish to usurp self-righteousness in any affair," said Mazarin, "is the part of disobedience, which our superiors have forbidden as the most dangerous rock to our spiritual virtues. What pride to call your life useless, when you are allowed to climb the step-ladder of our commands, which are given to you according to your capacity. You have already strayed from our rules; and I should punish you, if mildness and patience with the crimes of men were not our first law, and if you did not already feel your punishment in that spiritless dejection with which the protector of our holy order visits all

those who permit themselves to be seduced to a contemplation of their lives."

"Alas, right reverend sir, lay not the weight of your anger on my weak and depressed heart! God, who sees the minds of all men, knows how I have prayed for strength and courage to fulfil the will of my illustrious superior. He knows that I would not reflect, because reflection led me astray. But the tempter has appeared to me in the form of a master whom I love in opposition to my duty; and also in the form of my holy religion, which I am obliged to deny, and which asks whether I ought to do even what is right at such a price. Ah, sir, I am a sinner. I have fallen under the displeasure of the holy society. I feel it; and it is only you who can save me, as you often have done, while you support my wavering faith."

"Yes," said Mazarin, in a tone of reproach, which by degrees softened to a voice of pardon, "you have often laid upon me the melancholy task of reconciling you to your duties, and your bleached hair and furrowed cheek do not yet appear willing to absolve me from it."

"Reverend sir," interrupted the old man, while a slight blush overspread his cheeks, and his pale face was illumined by the long neglected feeling of honour, "consider, at least, that these cheeks lost their roundness, and this hair its colour, in the service of the holy order of Jesus."

"I came here not to consider this," said Mazarin gently; "and if no corner of the earth can conceal him from our punishment who forgets his duty, so our rewards reach the true and obedient servant, in whatever circumstances of life he may be. The superiors of the order receive him as a friend and brother, and he stands, like the powerful ones on the earth, in the sanctuary of their secret world. I come to bring you the blessing of the holy and enlightened Claudius Aquaviva: he gives you his high approbation, and permits you, through me, and in the name of him in whom we all believe, to continue in the service to which we are dedicated. For the attainment of that end, so important and pleasing to God, but which is unknown to us, he permits you still to deny your holy church, and to rank yourself, before the eyes of the short-sighted many,

among those who adore God according to their sinful understanding. He here sends you," continued Mazarin, drawing from his bosom a little golden box, "a wafer blessed by Urban himself, which I am authorized, by virtue of his will, to administer to you, according to the rites of our holy church, for the quickening of your spirit."

The impression which this speech, and the gift which accompanied it, made upon the old man, so broken down by the burden of his duty, was indescribable, and demonstrated the fearful power of the tyrannical yet flattering order to which he yielded obedience. The old man's features, sunken and distorted by doubts of conscience, appeared to expand to their original fulness; the stooping form became erect, and the staring eyes gleamed with a fire of fanaticism, which set his trembling body in movement. Prostrating himself in reverence, he stretched out his hand to the holy casket, which contained what he had so ardently longed for, of which he had been so long deprived, and which was now become his portion by means the most dignified. His doubts and cares were all at an end, and he felt himself only the submissive servant of the high college of Clermont.

Mazarin had too often used this means for attaining a victory, to see in it anything more than the accomplishment of a frequent task; and he now prepared himself to listen to what Porter had to reveal on matters of greater importance than the waverings of his own conscience, which the old man, now exclusively devoted to the interest of the order whose power he deemed a heavenly one, regarded as a temptation of the evil spirit, whose torments he expected to allay by the reception of the holy host.

We leave untaught the reasons by which Mazarin endeavoured to support these hopes. The result was, that Porter, whilst he betrayed the smallest actions of his prince, thought he was fulfilling the highest duty on earth, and at the same time serving virtue and the prince with the most faithful love.

"I first heard, at my landing, of Lady Buckingham's death," said Mazarin. "Lazarino joined the sailors who rowed me on shore. Perhaps this news made my journey here less necessary; and nothing but your absence could excuse the lateness of the communication."

"Reverend sir, my duty is more difficult, as the duke is continually near the prince. Nevertheless, according to your commands, I have used all means to serve you as quickly as possible; but while I thought Father Lorenzo with you, I heard of his decease. The despair of the illustrious prince, on hearing of the Lady Buckingham's death, was unbounded, and I much feared another illness. The duke remained with him: he sent me to bed, and the physician into the ante-room. The king was weeping loudly, and making gestures like a child; and the duke dragged him through the apartments to his own room, where he ordered him, as he would a boy, to go to rest. The prince would accept of no help, but from the duke and Lord Membroke, who served him. I saw all from a secret hiding-place," added he, smiling, "and watched till the hour arrived at which I was to meet you."

"Relate to me exactly from what time you reckon the intimacy between Buckingham and the prince, and whether you think the duke was aware of the prince's secret union."

"Before we went to Spain, he certainly knew nothing of it. Each had a secret yet different motive in endeavouring to frustrate the Earl of Bristol's efforts. The duke was annoyed by hearing the ambassador's name mentioned with respect and admiration. The old hatred against every member of this family, which had been engendered by the marriage of the earl's daughter to the Duke of Nottingham, was revived at the sight of his success; and so many remarks escaped him respecting this papistical heretic, as he was accustomed to term the Infanta, that at length the prince heard of them; but instead of annoying him, which the duke was not indisposed to do, the prince nearly entered into his views. You can imagine how the heart of the prince swelled, when he saw one difficulty sink after the other, and, urged by the king, was obliged to escape his anger by evasion. His last reliance was upon the Duke of Nottingham, who knew the situation of the prince, and consented to proceed to Spain. As the son-in-law of Lord Bristol, his journey did not excite surprise or suspicion; and he was authorized by the prince to use every means to prevent this union. In case of these failing, he was to trust the whole affair to the Infanta's

generosity, of which he had a high opinion. But before resorting to this expedient, he was to use all his influence to persuade Lord Bristol; and this unhappy heretic promised, in my presence, to represent to the ambassador, that the union with a catholic princess would corrupt the whole land.

“ You know, sir, what followed, and that the poor duke reached Madrid only to die. His journey brought on a fever, of which he expired; his zeal for the prince having rendered him regardless of those precautions necessary to preserve his own health. When the news of his death arrived here, twelve hours after I had received intelligence of it from Manzoni, the Duke of Buckingham was with his royal highness. I had not ventured to prepare him for the intelligence, lest I should betray the manner in which it came to my knowledge; and he was so overpowered with grief that he was obliged to lean on the man whom he had for so many years shunned. Ah! my lord, that arm now supported him, which had once been raised against him. In his grief, the prince revealed the object of the duke’s journey to Spain, accusing himself as the murderer of his friend. From this moment, Buckingham has filled the place of that friend. Nevertheless, he did not at first learn the secret motive of the prince’s aversion to the union; for although the duke is malicious and cunning, he is also very careless, and therefore constantly overlooks the motives which guide others, unless, indeed, they interfere with his own views. Suffice it to say, however, that he supported the prince’s resolution of going himself to Spain, and he understood so well the art of managing his lord, that he persuaded him to obtain the king’s permission. The king promised the prince that this union should be prevented, and at the same time expressed his hatred to the Earl of Bristol. He further promised, that, if they went to Spain, he would go disguised as the master; and then he pledged a thousand honours and lives that he would bring the prince back unharmed. You know how completely he broke his word.”

“ Yes,” interrupted Mazarin, seized with involuntary indignation, “ because the Jesuit fathers would not oppose him, and, unknown to himself, led the old fool to act according to their will and pleasure.

They protected his journey, and saved the prince from a thousand dangers. But proceed with your narration," he added, as if surprised by his own ill-humour.

"The prince wished to deceive the Lady Buckingham as to the motive of his journey to Spain, as she had before been deceived respecting that of the Duke of Nottingham. This was very easily accomplished, as she was then gone into Scotland, to visit her daughter. This noble lady had always wished to set the prince free, and had she known of this step she would never have permitted it. His highness therefore sent a messenger to her (for her return from Scotland was expected to take place soon) to beg her to excuse his remaining absent a little time longer, on account of the illness of the king, and desiring her to send him no more letters until she had again heard from him. Thus the danger of these communications falling into strange hands was obviated; but at the same time the poor lady was deprived of the means of announcing to him her approaching end. The only step which she would take was to apprise the Duke of Nottingham, under whose name all her letters were addressed, of her situation; but even this was useless, for the messenger returned with the intelligence of his death. Thus it happened, that the news of her decease was communicated by the steward of her estate to the young Earl of Buckingham, who hastened immediately to take possession of his sister's property.

"At our return, I learnt what I have told you respecting the death of the Lady Buckingham, and the disappearance of her niece. The prince did not think of going to see her, for the king and the duke would scarcely permit him to quit their sight, and he wished to send me to greet her to whom he now thought himself more closely allied. The poor lady had been so forgotten by the world, that her death was as the continuance of her life; and nobody at court knew of it, for nobody had any connexion with her.

"At this time, the young Earl of Buckingham, who had, as usual, been travelling about the country, returned to London, and announced her death to the duke; but the latter, who had seen nothing of her since she left London, was quite indifferent to the subject, and it was more by accident, than from any other feeling, that he com-

municated the intelligence, first to the king, and afterwards to the prince. As I had anticipated something of the kind, I remained near the latter, and witnessed the melancholy scene which followed. The prince was cold and white as marble: he put his hand to his heart, and fell to the ground in a swoon. I immediately locked the door, and tried to recover him; but from the ravings that followed, Buckingham discovered the secret. When he began to recover, he sought for consolation in the heart of the brother, and formed the extravagant plan of showing that honour to the deceased which he had not been able to grant her in life, and of requesting the king's permission to acknowledge the young lady as his daughter. The duke did not oppose him, for he was apparently much surprised, and could not comprehend the affair. He merely quieted his royal highness, by promising him his co-operation. But the prince fell into a second swoon, to which succeeded total exhaustion, and Buckingham thus gained the time he so much desired. The physician was now called in, and the king was informed of what had occurred; and although the duke did all he could to keep away idle persons, the news of his illness was spread through the whole palace."

"And what," demanded Mazarin, "did you hear of the young lady, who disappeared, and whose safety Lord Buckingham threatened?"

"Davenant related to me what he had heard from the lord's own chamberlain. The young earl received the news of his sister's death on the same day that the prince and his brother the duke left London, and he resolved to proceed to the lady's castle, in the hope of finding a legacy for himself. But he delayed his departure so long, that he found the lady in her coffin; and one evening, when he had been sitting at table until midnight, the old chamberlain informed him that there were some persons in disguise in the room of state where the body lay. The young man appears always to have suspected some secret; and taking some servants with him, he went thither, and found the young lady kneeling by the corpse of her mother. He tore away the veil which covered her, and her likeness to his sister confused him so much that he thought he had beheld a spirit. The sudden alarm of fire gave her an opportunity of escap-

ing with Gersem; and the earl discovered a room, hitherto overlooked, in which was a poor woman, half burnt. This was Mistress Hannah, who had, in her sleep, overturned a candle, and occasioned the fire. Awakened by the flames, and recollecting that she was locked into the room, she had torn open the window, in order thus to escape; but the admission of the air rendered the flames more violent, and she was compelled to remain there until the door was burnt down, and help came from without. When the danger was over, the earl missed the lady. Castle, gardens, and park were searched in vain; but a shepherd boy betrayed the fugitives, who had taken horses from one of the adjacent farms. The beauty of the maiden, and the mystery attending her flight, excited the earl; and he, accompanied by several servants, took horses and set off in pursuit. They soon overtook her. Gersem was stunned by a blow, and thus the lady was left in the earl's power. Life appeared to have left her; but she was conveyed to a hut, where they passed the night, and where every means were used to restore her. Gersem was carried back to the castle.

“From this hut the lady escaped through a window; and whether the earl had lost his desire of pursuit, or whether she reached some place of safety, is uncertain. The earl returned to the castle, and finding that Gersem and Hannah were dying, all the servants were enjoined to strict secrecy on the subject. He then left the place, disappointed, and, I doubt not, somewhat embarrassed, as he knew not how his brother, the duke, would regard the affair; for those who are the most averse to criticism on their own conduct, are generally the most severe on the actions of others. The earl always wished to give the duke some intelligence of the young lady, whose connexion with the deceased was not to be regarded in any light but that of suspicion. When Gersem recovered, a messenger was sent to question him on this point; but he was inexorable. He denied all knowledge of her name or family, and his grief sufficiently proved that he did not know where she was now concealed. He acknowledged, however, that it was his intention to have taken her to London.

“Her residence, however, is now discovered; for the earl,

determined to see her again, ordered that the neighbourhood should be searched by Alois and his people. He was certain she could not have gone far without finding protection, and therefore he thought that some information might be obtained. This idea was confirmed. Alois attired himself as a mendicant, and in the neighbourhood of Sheffield he met a brilliant cavalcade of ladies and gentlemen, among whom he instantly recognised the young Lady Mary. They had come from Godway Castle, and the Duke of Nottingham was at their head. To obtain admission to the castle, under pretence of asking nourishment, was easy; but to take the young lady away was almost impossible; for she lived in the family circle, receiving all the attention that etiquette and safety demanded. The earl was therefore compelled to await the arrival of his brother, before he could do anything more."

During this long relation, Mazarin had from time to time noted down some few words on a paper before him, but his sharp eye had remarked every movement of the old man, whose actions were rather peculiar. The pale meagre face remained the same throughout his narrative; the eye had been sunk on the ground; but he had a habit of moving his hand quickly backwards and forwards in the air, and this movement he accompanied with a bitter and contemptuous smile, which revealed his opinion to his auditor, although his words were merely those of a humble and devoted servant.

Mazarin perceived that, by this action, he designated those persons towards whom he privately felt hatred—a feeling that redoubled the zeal excited by his duty towards the holy order. Though such a betrayal of his inward opinion was to be blamed—for the laws of this order required perfect outward self-control—yet Mazarin did not, in this case, venture to reprove. He had no suspicion of him; for Porter's treachery towards the prince was so well concealed, and his love and solicitude for his master were so well known and had been so often tried, that he was looked upon as a faithful servant, and therefore shared in the most important occurrences of the prince's life, by which means they became known to the holy order. At the same time, the superiors of that order took care to test his obedience by many proofs, fearing that even that obedience

was disadvantageous to them; for his often-excited scruples of conscience were to be imputed to the society of the prince, whose pure, honourable, and virtuous character was not without its influence in counteracting the sophistical maxims which had been instilled into Porter. The order had also represented to him that his heavy duty arose from its love to the prince, whom the fathers would protect from his enemies; and having taken him under their special guardianship, they hoped to be able to rescue him from the fetters of heresy.

Porter's capabilities did not reach far, but he had the talent for observing little things; and his representations to his superiors showed that he never overlooked anything essential, nor was ever at a loss for means to obtain knowledge. He was, therefore, an invaluable agent in the midst of a court, more especially as he required no further incitement than the approbation of the holy church, and the great fear which the superiors knew how to instil into him. His natural love for intrigue, developed from his youth upwards, and now the only charm of his dreary and lonely life, maintained him in his position.

"First," said Mazarin, with the coldness of the superior who listens to a narrative which he had commanded—"first, you must let me know what Buckingham decides—whether he has ascertained the abode of the lady, and what he knows respecting her. Secondly," added he, with a piercing look, which sometimes revealed his mind—"secondly, I will see whatever messenger or letter Buckingham or Membroke may send away. Davenant will regard this as a preliminary inducement," he continued, handing a heavy purse to Porter. "You, individually, can have little esteem for such things: you can have had no expenses; and the order would refuse to see your reckoning, since you have had your reward in the contents of that box. But take this, and do not spare such miserable means."

Porter took with indifference a certain sum, whilst he said, with pride, "Remember, that I do not receive this on my own account, as you have rightly stated."

Without answering, Mazarin turned away. His experience had

amply satisfied him of the efficiency of such means, and he never failed to avail himself of its influence upon his tools. With Porter, however, it served merely for the accessory operations, which must not be allowed to fail. The latter received the commands for his service with due deference, and then went on his secret way; whilst Mazarin gave himself up to Benville's hands, in order to prepare for his couch, where he sought sleep as if it could be commanded by him to whom life was valuable only in so far as it gave all to his will.

CHAPTER XV.

It would be difficult to penetrate the chaos of thoughts into which Buckingham was plunged. He felt the necessity of some decision, because the returning consciousness of the prince would call forth requisitions which he must prepare himself to answer.

It irritated him to find that such an important secret should have been withheld from him—that his spies should have overlooked anything so weighty—that the prince, whom he had so long tolerated as a young boy, had, in conjunction with his despised and forgotten sister, thus deceived him, in a matter which would have most flattered his ambition, and raised him to the highest point of splendour. This means of ennobling his family to the greatest degree, and of thwarting Bristol, who had treated him with deserved neglect, in the midst of his operations—this event, which he had endeavoured to bring about before the prince became heir to the throne, and had relinquished in despair—this had now happened, without his assistance or knowledge. All this, and the humiliating conviction that his power was not all-potent, called forth a resentment and anger which overcame all other consideration.

This feeling would have been more moderate had his sister yet lived to assist his ambition; but her death rendered the prince again the free property of the state, and he foresaw that these

neglected advantages, if known, would render him everywhere more ridiculous than enviable. He was obliged to confess with detestation, that the prince had used him as a tool in the Spanish journey, by withholding his confidence; whilst he had calculated upon making use of the prince in his plans against Bristol. For so many humiliations and lost advantages, a royal niece appeared but a poor compensation. She was even a burden and a hindrance to his plans; and all the vexations which his proud heart fancied to have suffered through her mother, now fell upon this innocent being, whose sacrifice seemed to him but a small revenge for his many injuries. Certainly, he must confess that the acknowledgment of her lawful existence must finish what he had begun in Spain; but even this affair was settled for him; for Spain now not only expressed disinclination to the union of the families, but pointed towards open enmity. He would not have this breach, which he, triumphing over Bristol, strove to take to himself alone, imputed to a cause in its circumstances insulting to himself, but he wished it to be said that it failed because Buckingham had not willed it.

The announcement of this secret union was also but little suited to promote the new views of Buckingham, who desired not only to wrest out of Bristol's hands the great work of marrying the prince, but to accomplish that important event himself. With this view, he had led the prince through France, in his way to Spain; and while he suffered his natural advantages to win the favour of the court of Louis XIII., and the prince himself to become acquainted with the blooming beauty of the Princess Henrietta, daughter of Henry IV., he had disposed Richelieu to a union between them, by representing the prince as already in love, and the visit to Spain as a means of obtaining Henrietta. Richelieu had no interest in not believing this: the union suited him; and he knew, better than Buckingham did, its recommendations. But he knew not how to remove the difficulty, which he had some trouble in concealing; especially as his knowledge of the sister being yet alive must have made some alteration in the plan.

Richelieu therefore resolved not to let this be discovered by the duke, until he had driven the affair far enough to compel his pride

to carry it on, and to be obliged to remove the obstacle. For though the Duke of Buckingham aimed at being a powerful diplomatic agent, he was too much the prey of his passions to become so with dignity and superiority; and how could so great an affair prosper in his hands, when the settlement of those minor points, which he might have accomplished with ease, was frustrated by the haughtiness and carelessness of his whole bearing, even in the gravest affairs. Notwithstanding this often happened, he scrupled not to impute to his own talents that which was owing to his clever emissaries, or to the fear of his unbridled revenge. In like manner, he treated this French union with a levity which could not fail to involve him in personal danger, and which rendered him quite unfit for a negotiator, to which his ambition aspired.

Anne of Austria lived at the court of her husband, Louis XIII., as a despised wife. Although for thirteen years the most beautiful and talented woman that ever adorned a throne, she was the object of her husband's unconquerable dislike. Young and proud, she bore her hard fate with deep vexation, successfully guarding her conduct from the reproach of having deserved it. How could Buckingham associate with a woman whose magic beauty at once captivated him, and whose peculiar position was no secret, without using the temptations which the bold licentiousness of a spoiled spendthrift might devise, to lead astray the heart and conscience of a passionate woman. It was certain that Richelieu knew this, for he knew and guided every acquaintance of the unhappy queen; but the disposition of the duke had provided him with such a spy as Buckingham did not dream of, who saw through him, and wound himself round him.

Mazarin, whose plain exterior would remove every suspicion, had, by the slow influence of habit, by a well-cultivated mind, by a gentle manner, rendered attractive by little caprices and whims, and, above all, by the silent expression of a devoted, unhappy attachment to the queen, at last softened the proud heart of this passionate woman. Possessing a complete control over her, and increasing this by the capricious singularities which he accustomed her to bear, he still kept his Italian warmth of feeling under his own control, in

order to regulate it to outward circumstances. Thus arose, from love, the powerful influence which he afterwards enjoyed. But while quietly maintaining this union, under the eyes, and with the consent of Richelieu, he possessed a degree of vanity of which ordinary men are more susceptible, because the personal advantages denied to them oblige them to conceal it.

Mazarin was, secretly, unspeakably flattered with having infused a passion into this beautiful, clever, and imperious queen, which totally changed her character, and made her the feeble tool of his will. It was, perhaps, the greatest delusion of his clear mind, to consider as impossible any risk of losing a power thus acquired, and his vanity alone could have induced him to deem himself safe. How must he then have regarded Buckingham, who, not anticipating in him a rival nearly overtaking him, rushed forward with the vehemence and reckless assurance of a handsome man, who did not suppose the object attainable by another. But Buckingham's visit had been too short, and the amorous woman favoured his mad passion only in jest; for she feared the deadly envy of Mazarin, whilst her vanity was gratified by the admiration of a man so famed for beauty and gallantry. Mazarin saw her practise towards him the little arts which would seduce him, only to mock at him; but awakened out of his pleasing certainty, he was deceived no longer, and, for the first time, found his political views and determinations hindered by his strongest feelings.

Richelieu quickly saw this, and secretly imparted to him those circumstances in the affair which should bind the courts of France and England together through Buckingham's views. But it was reserved for Buckingham, on his return, to acknowledge his rival, and to learn the almost incredible passion of the queen for this plain, grave, and singular man. His anger then burned to destroy this favourite, whom he despised; and the vanity of the queen assisted him. The duke had left France with the promise of returning as public ambassador and suitor to the princess, and of continuing an acquaintance which the levity of the queen only too much favoured. But however haughtily he might forward his views, he felt that his situation was not without difficulty. Richelieu, who had been

his secret friend, having the same interests, and expressing the most flattering sentiments for him, was now opposed to him. The queen's warnings had proved how little he might trust him; and this compelled him to depart at once, in order to return in such an official character as should secure his safety. This plan for the French marriage was his own idea, and by it he hoped most effectually to pacify King James for the destruction of his hopes with Spain. The beauty of Henrietta he thought would prevail with the prince, and her liberal education gave him nothing to fear from her influence as a catholic.

Already had James, unable to resist Buckingham, given his consent; while the admiration of the prince for the fascinating Henrietta appeared likely to ensure his also. The long-desired moment was therefore near, in which he hoped to return to France as the suitor for his prince, and, under this character, to pursue the secret wishes of his unprincipled heart. How, then, must he have received the obstacle which threatened him, through the circumstances of the prince. And how, also, the arrival of Mazarin, who did not travel without weighty motives, and whom he had to fear in so many respects! But obstacles give to the politician only a warmer principle of life, associating the delight of humbling a rival with the desire of accomplishing his wishes. We leave this scene of passion for a time, contenting ourselves with the glimpses whose further development will be seen in the course of our story.

CHAPTER XV.

Besides the family of Lord Dorset, there was collected at Burton Hall a numerous company of old and young persons from the neighbourhood, which filled the hospitable castle of the universally respected duchess, producing there the merriment of a continual feast. The beautiful autumn, and the rich surrounding woods, afforded

amusement to the gentlemen of the company, and the ladies occasionally joined in these pleasures. Hunting was the favourite enjoyment. In the presence of brilliant eyes, to kill the beautiful flying stag, or the raging wild boar, and at the same time to manage the horse and exercise arms with dexterity and grace, had, in their hearts, a still deeper aim; for where the influence of beauty is felt in exalted station, man delights in the triumphs and dangers of horsemanship, if he perceives an increased bloom in the cheeks of the observer, or hears a cry of fear from her lips. But in the times of which we speak, such triumphs were not easily acquired. The ladies were then so much accustomed to join in the pleasures of the chase, that it required no common skill to win their applause. These amusements were varied by those which the lovely lake afforded; and after mornings thus passed, the young people enjoyed a pleasant dance, whilst the seniors conversed together in the adjoining rooms.

In this circle the young duchess maintained the quiet reserve of a widow, seeking not to disturb the gladness of those around her, and regulating her own feelings with tender respect to her lively mother-in-law. But the influence of her character appeared everywhere, even against her will, and her unintentional coldness seemed to rebuke the merriment of others. In consequence of the slighter perception of character peculiar to the happy time of youth, and owing to the superior rank and age of the duchess, which she neither possessed the talent nor the inclination of her good step-mother to soften, the young people did not feel this constraint.

The duchess missed her sons from this circle with more grief than she wished to acknowledge. The softness produced by the death of her husband, and the circumstances which followed it, was so unusual to her mind, that the removal of one care brought back her proud security. The destruction of her happiness had also made her reserved; and there were even moments when, looking with astonishment at her weakness, she repented of her confidence towards her step-mother, from whose sympathy she sought to withdraw herself by a cold bearing, and her undeniable ill

health. However cheerfully and with true kindness the noble matron had received this confidence, it could not heal the wounded feeling with which the duchess had shown herself an unloved wife, who knew that she had occupied only the second place in her husband's heart. She was also burdened by the presence of the being so important to her, which prevented her forgetting her grief for a moment, and also tormented her as to the future. Nevertheless, her strong rectitude led her to allow to the young lady all that outward circumstances appeared to claim.

The Bishop of Edinburgh had written that Brixton was absent in London; adding, that the Earl and Countess of Melville had certainly died childless; that their possessions in Scotland had fallen to a distant relation, and that their English estate was, for some reason, placed under the care of the state. All this, properly authenticated, appeared to deny the existence of any natural heir. Thus Lady Mary's claims were proved worthless, and the duchess had a perfect right to remove from the circle of her family a young woman over whom there rested so dark a cloud. Not to do so, appeared to be too generous; besides which, the duchess feared that it might cause her to be blamed, as not acting in accordance with the dignity of her house.

But while rejoicing in the thought that she might with propriety banish this young person to a decent retirement from herself and her family, she again recollected the secret but strong claims of this unhappy one; and the image of him whom she had so devotedly loved swept before her mind, and assisted the honest courage which so often overcame her moments of passion. After such victories, she could bear to see her without bitterness, and with that feeling which the lady had first won from her. This self-command was an unacknowledged struggle to merit the love of the deceased one. She had previously assigned to her guest that place to which nature seemed to entitle her; and as the strongest minds find limits to their arbitrary proceedings, which make them acknowledge a power beyond their own, so the duchess felt here a limit beyond which she had no strength to proceed. At length, wearied, she began to hope that chance would release her

from affairs which she had once thought herself skilful enough to guide.

Richmond had succeeded in convincing the young duke of the impossibility of his marriage with the young lady, who, however she might claim kindness, must not be allowed to detach him from the settled contract with Anna Dorset. Happily, the well-arranged and secret departure of the old lady, who took with her the object of this unhappy passion, prevented the duke from taking leave; for Richmond, avoiding her sight, had accompanied his brother, knowing this the best way of preventing any fresh trouble. Whatever sorrows heaven may inflict upon our youth, the greatest is the first grief of hopeless love, preying as a powerful bird with outspread wings upon our hearts. Our spirit sinks under its pressure, and the clearness of heaven envelopes itself in the beating of its wings. Yes—the more exalted the being becomes through a true love, ripening the strength and courage of youth to ideal efforts, so much the deeper does the loss of this motive pierce into the soul. We do not understand how we can continue to live, and what there can be for us to do in the world: we seem destined to travel a gloomy waste, which only slowly leads us, at last, into the wide ways of life.

In this humour the young duke accompanied his brother and Lord Archibald to London, whither the latter had hastened, because the situation of the Earl of Bristol in Spain rendered it necessary for his friends in England to be active. It was no longer a secret that Buckingham had separated the Infanta and the Prince of Wales. The friends of the earl had no doubt that this was done to annoy him; and even as little did they doubt the further steps of Buckingham, irritated by Bristol's virtues. But the private envy of the English lord did not dispose Spain to bear the affront, which, after the gratifying journey of the prince, was too great an insult to the Infanta, not to justify an earnest and threatening position. Already were warlike demonstrations put forth by Olivarez, personally affronted, which the wisdom of Bristol could no longer hope to soothe; but he perceived with vexation that this innocent inability was made a crime through Buckingham's influence, and that he

should be obliged to endure, on his recal, the accusation of having occasioned the outbreak of a war, the probability of which lay before his eyes, and of the issue of which he had little hope under existing circumstances.

The unpleasant situation of her highly honoured father remained a secret from the Duchess of Nottingham. The political troubles consequent upon the breaking of the union of the two courts appeared to her a sufficient motive for the presence of her relations in London, and were welcome to her at a moment when the removal and amusement of the young duke could be promoted the most easily through his interest for the Prince of Wales. She was therefore surprised to learn, by a letter, the probability of Richmond's speedy arrival; for she would have preferred him to be near his brother, although the duke's state of mind was represented as moderate and resigned. The blow had meanwhile fallen: Bristol was recalled; and Richmond was deputed by his friends to carry the intelligence of his fall, and to prepare the unhappy duchess for what could no longer be concealed.

CHAPTER XVI.

Richmond and his suite approached the castle of his grandmother at a late hour in the afternoon. The beautiful scenery through which he had travelled called up recollections of his youth; and at length the sight of the house itself, which, from its highest point to its most obscure corner, recalled the joyful scenes of childhood, all united to cheer his heart, and to fill it with impatient longings. He spurred on his horse, which, like his master, foreseeing comfortable repose, speedily bore him to the gate, where an old and gray porter reposed by the open entrance, in the rays of the autumnal sun—a picture of deep peace, which here ruled, instead of the doors, portcallis, and loopholes, which formerly protected the entrance of a baronial residence.

The tramp of the horse awoke the porter from his peaceful dream, and he joyfully doffed his cap, as he recognised a relative of his beloved mistress, and a guest who was welcome to every servant, and from whom each was sure of a kind word and look. He hastened to announce the arrival in the inner court, occupied by the servants of the family and of the guests, where the well-covered table, the full flagons, and the joyful mood of all around, evinced the free housekeeping of the old lady.

The new arrivals increased the joy; and Richmond passed slowly to the great hall, where he was respectfully welcomed by Lovelace, who, leading him to the inner part of the castle, begged to delay the announcement of his arrival, as the two duchesses had retired to take a brief repose. Richmond would have disregarded this on the present occasion, but the servant begged him not to interrupt the fixed time of the ladies' retirement. He therefore threw off his travelling dress, and hastened to feast upon the delights of old remembrances, by traversing the well-known rooms. The time was favourable: the company were abroad, in order to enjoy the lovely weather; and Richmond could safely reach that part of the house to which his heart attracted him, before his visit to the duchess, and without meeting the other inhabitants of the castle.

The rooms which Richmond wished to visit formed the apartments of the old duchess, and the approach to them was through a gallery containing a long row of ancestral pictures of the house of Nottingham, and those related to them in the female line. They represented the strength of the proud house, and also the state of art when they were painted, from rough sketches of a head and hand, up to the delightful creations of Holbein and Vandyk. Richmond probably cared little for this study; for he hastily passed on, as if he feared their claims to his sympathy, and disappeared through a door which led to the front of the castle. He now stood alone, and overcome by his feelings, in a large room hung with purple velvet, which retained its beauty despite the years which had passed over it. The windows were large doors of uncoloured glass, and opening upon a balcony leading to many rooms. This was surrounded by a stone parapet, having, at regular distances, slender pillars, which

supported a light roof of rich stucco work, covering the balcony, and rendering it a pleasant retreat, in which the duchess passed her morning and evening hours. The deep stillness was interrupted only by the song of birds, nestling in the shrubs beneath; and the view extended far over the wood to open land, with a wide and shining river, and bounded by distant hills; all offering a wide and busy prospect of the life whose actuality appeared to end in the oasis of this peaceful place.

Richmond longed for this. Here would he renew those sweet conversations, which, when a boy, he had held with his longings and his dreams. This place appeared dedicated to the remembrance of his earlier moments. Here he had often passed his hours in undisturbed loneliness, his fancy unwearied with forming, out of the misty future, rich coloured images. Here he had awakened to self-consciousness, and, as it were, separated from life, had calmly reflected upon it. Who that knows the place where this first happens to him, does not regard it as a sanctuary, dedicated through all time?

Ripened to maturity, even before his years, he regarded this holy place as if, instead of years, only a night had flown. Time had lost its effect upon him. He looked first with tenderness upon the large easy chair, which his grandmother usually occupied, its high back guarding her from the air. Some crumbs were scattered on the ground, and on the edge of the balcony, in order to entice from the park the little feathered guests, who, knowing their benefactress, collected in crowds at her feet, where their wants were always supplied. The little old-fashioned table stood near, with the ebony boxes into which she pulled silk. All these showed that they had just been used, and that this place was still valued by her who possessed it.

It was a chequered train of thoughts which glided through the young man's mind. The gentle expression of devotion in his face passed slowly into a grave and earnest mien; and when his imagination returned from contemplating the past, a deep breathing, resembling a sigh, broke from him, and his eye became moist. Startled by voices, which reached him from an adjoining room.

he hastened to the cabinet, in which hung the pictures that the old lady reckoned among her most valuable possessions. These were partly gifts, which her husband owed to the favour of his king, and partly the works of the best artists, obtained from them at a high price. They were portraits of the most distinguished sovereigns of England. These pictures had always exercised a kind of spell over Richmond, who regarded them with a lively interest for the history of his country, and he endeavoured to gather from their expressive features what had been already unlocked in the mirror of history. The room was elegantly furnished, and, with its polished floor and rich gilded stucco, resembled a jewel-box, from which issued a perfume of the richly inlaid cedar; and some elegant chairs, covered with purple, were placed in readiness for those guests who wished to join so exalted an assemblage. Richmond was almost the only one among his family who had been allowed, as a child, to enter this room; and he felt intense joy as he opened the door, and the light, streaming through in the large glass windows, showed him these pictures in their full brilliancy. He listened to the peculiar sound occasioned by the lock of the door, which seemed to greet him, and to invite him to enter, leading him, as if by enchantment, into the presence of the life-looking forms of the various worthies of the past century.

He stood for a moment at the entrance, as if inquiring whether the place were changed; but he was obliged to confess that it was his mind that had undergone an alteration, for all before him was in the same order as it was in bygone years. The great companions of his former loneliness stood before him: they looked out of their massive gold frames just as usual, and still appeared content that their faithful resemblances should descend to posterity. But Richmond weighed the claims which they put forth, turning away in contempt from many of their failings, whilst at the same time acknowledging whatever good they had done for his country.

Turning from the picture next to him, he hastened to one, the chief of all, which hung opposite the door. It was that of Queen Elizabeth, and was her gift, as godmother to the lately deceased duke. It was painted by a master hand. The proud woman, eyes

at the height of her glory, liked to be reminded of her early unhappiness; and Woodstock, where she lived in philosophical retirement, was the background of all her portraits. There stood the palace, and the fine old oaks under which she was sitting when she was called to ascend the throne of England. On the right side of the picture was a purple curtain, which, partly drawn back, displayed to view the landscape behind. Her face bore an expression of talent and liveliness, which gave to her manly-formed features a truly regal appearance, and which supplied the want of womanly beauty. Her rich dress of silver brocade was so arranged as to leave her beautiful shoulders uncovered, and round her throat was the lace ruff which was worn at that time. Her head was raised, and turned to the right side; her shining golden hair was drawn back, leaving her large forehead quite exposed. On her head was a coronet of brilliants, and from under it long curls fell in easy negligence on each side. Her lips were opened, as if speaking, and she held in her right hand the Odes of Horace. On the left side was a pedestal, on which stood a bust of Plato, and a table on which she had laid her sceptre. However important were the adjuncts of this portrait, the painter had succeeded in making them all subordinate to the figure of the mighty woman. The bold masculine look, and proudly-formed lips, showed her the daughter of Henry VIII., the woman whom Sixtus V. placed next to himself, and whom Henry IV. of France designated the third autocrat.

On her left side hung the portrait of her father, painted by Holbein, at the time of the marriage of Mary of England with Louis of France. He was seated on the throne; he wore a hat, with a plume of white feathers, secured by a jewel; one hand rested on a table, upon which lay a crown; the other held his own translation of the New Testament. A smile was perceptible on his face, but it was a smile of sneering triumph, rather than of joy or cheerfulness; and a glance at his features gave the spectator forebodings of his later tyrannical character.

Opposite to him were the pictures of his two children, Edward VI. and his sister Mary. The former represented a boy, with a white greyhound, his favourite dog, on which he appeared to lean.

His curls hung thickly round his head, and his dark blue eyes bore an expression of sorrow. Far in the background lay the insignia of his royalty.

"Painful fate!" exclaimed Richmond, "when nature, in opposition to the calling which heaven has given us, does not bestow strength to fulfil its duties. But better thy weak rule, than the misuse of the power by which it was succeeded. Who would not prefer thy reign to that of thy sister?"

Mary's portrait was painted in her thirty-eighth year, immediately after her betrothal with Philip of Spain. In the background was a blood-red curtain, increasing the painful impression which this picture produced; for no one could look at the cruel woman without fancying that she had emerged from the river of blood which she had caused to flow. She was seated on a chair, on the high back of which were embroidered the arms of England and Spain. She was attired in the black robe of a Carmelite nun, and on her head was a crown, from which a long black veil fell to the ground. On the left side was a table, on which lay a prayer-book and a crucifix, and near it was a sceptre and a scourge, the end of which was drawn through the fingers of her right hand; while in her left was a picture of Philip of Spain, whom she loved so tenderly. Her pale face, far removed from the charms of youth and beauty, was strongly contrasted with her black veil, and revealed the united expression of melancholy and fanaticism. Richmond had early learnt to feel for the misery she had brought upon his country; and as, when a boy, he hated this picture, so he now turned from it with contempt; for from these features would posterity be able to guess what she was, though her name might be forgotten.

Anxious to remove the impression made upon him, he now turned to the next picture, as he had often done when a boy. Next to her great-uncle, Henry VIII., hung the lovely portrait of that young queen of nine days, the first sacrifice to the cruelty of Mary, the beautiful Lady Jane Grey. Her dark-blue eyes had a heavenly expression, and she looked like a messenger from a better world. She was about fifteen, but already the wife of the amiable Lord Guildford Dudley, and was standing before a chair, her head turned

round as if looking out of the picture. Her fine youthful form was clad in white brocade, with a blue train, the colour of the house of Suffolk. Her beautiful fair hair hung in waving ringlets down her back, reaching below the middle of her figure, and being drawn off the forehead, was confined by a blue riband. On the top of her head was the ducal coronet; and in the background a pillared hall, through which Lord Guildford was advancing to meet her.

"Ah!" cried Richmond, deeply moved by so much unhappiness and so much virtue, "would that that childlike head had never worn a heavier diadem than the ducal coronet which was thy undisputed inheritance."

There was yet one picture which he knew well. But he delayed to look at it; for he must first mark his own heart, and still its beating, should he feel as a man what had so touched him as a boy. Must he confess that he had bestowed upon a picture his sweetest emotions and feelings? "No," cried he, "this enthusiasm is boyish?" He turned round anxiously; and as a ray of the sun turns the frost of a May night into dawsdrops, so vanished at his first glance his intention, whilst every feeling of thought, and heart, and soul, gathered round their old centre. By the entrance door, and, as it were, in a shrine cut in the panel for it, hung a half-length picture of the beautiful and unfortunate queen of Scotland. The frame was decorated with the arms of the three kingdoms, which which had been hers, in gold and precious stones: those of France and Scotland were on the upper edge, and in the centre those of England. The frame was rich in ornamental work, and it was hung by a riband embroidered in gold, with the names of her companions in her confinement, forming a valuable specimen of art. The portrait stood forth from a green background. The bright brown hair was drawn back, showing the whole of the regal forehead. The contour of the head was of the finest oval, even to the youthful chin, to which the beautifully curved mouth appeared gracefully to extend the influence of her delicate wit. The full pale cheeks exhibited a slight furrow, and denoted the mixed pain and pleasure of her life. To her were first given these eyes, the heritage of her race, which enchained in love every one upon whom

they rested. Under the slightly arched eyebrows reposed the large brown eyes, which, clear and deep, showed the high mind which lay within. They appeared unwillingly to presage misfortune, and the long black lashes seemed as a mourning veil to them. The nose was Grecian, increasing the intellectual expression of the features. The beautiful brown hair was unadorned, and, bound round the head, formed the only crown of the queen; thus showing the delicate throat, upon which the head rested so lightly, that even a barberian could scarcely dare to separate them. The figure was clad in black velvet, and a fine lace collar was fastened by a ruby set in brilliants.

Moments flew while Richmond gazed on this picture, until he almost felt that it lived, and that its life blessed him. He promised himself, with emotion, that he would never oppose this feeling, that it should be to him a little happy island, upon which he would throw himself, casting away reality far from him. Thus entranced, he was not disturbed by hearing song and harp from the balcony. The beautiful, womanly voice, the artistical expressive tones of the harp, wove themselves into his dream. With increasing delight he heard the words of the immortal Shakspeare—those which the women in Henry VIII. sang to Katherine on the evening before her trial :—

“ Orpheus with his lute made trees,
And the mountain tops that freeze,
Bow themselves, when he did sing
To his music, plants and flowers
Ever sprung; as sun and showers
There had been a lasting spring.

“ Everything that heard him play,
Even the billows of the sea,
Hung their heads, and then lay by.
In sweet music is such art:
Killing care, and grief of heart,
Fall asleep, or, hearing, die.”

Solemn chords closed this touching song, and woke the happy dreamer; for it was not Mary herself who had sung it. He was

not at Stirling or Holyrood, but at Burton, and a few steps would lead him into the midst of his family. Aroused from his dream, he opened the door, and stood on the edge of the balcony. The young ladies of the castle had here collected themselves, to hear the Lady Melville sing to her harp, and she now reclined in the chair of the old duchess, clad in a black dress. Her harp rested on one arm; and upon the scarlet velvet of the high back of the chair reposed her beautiful head, in all its regular elegance; while, animated by the song, and the praises of her lovely companions, the full magic of her lively mind shone forth. She had turned towards Arabella and Anna Dorset, who were arm in arm at her feet; Olonia Dorset sat with her head raised tenderly towards the singer; whilst Lucy had climbed up the back of the chair, and stooped down to embrace the favourite. Quickly and lightly, Lady Mary sprang up, drew the sweet child towards her, and, surrounded by all, stood as the goddess of love and joy. Shaking back her rich brown curls, and raising her head, her eye caught Richmond, at the opposite end of the balcony, in deep attention. After gazing for a moment, she stretched out her hand, and pointing towards him, said, "See, there is Lord Richmond."

In a moment all turned, and the sisters and cousins flew to him with joyful greetings, whilst Lucy hung on his neck, trying to take sole possession of him with loud vehemence. He answered their affectionate welcome with kindness, and then hastened to Lady Mary. She was leaning in pleasant quiet on the balustrade, while her face glowed with innocent joy and sympathy at the scene. Smilingly she glided towards those who approached her, but Richmond outstepped the rest.

"Here," cried Lucy, springing forward, "here, Richmond, is my angel, Lady Mary."

"To what happy accident do I owe it that Lady Melville is acquainted with me?" he inquired.

"Acquainted!" she replied. "Indeed, my lord, I never saw you till this moment. But," she added, with a quiet expression of natural innocence, "when I saw you, I knew it must be you."

While she spoke, Richmond's eyes sank involuntarily to the ground.

He drank in the tones of her harmonious voice, and when she stopped, the altered young man was puzzled how to answer. He raised his eyes—his look met hers—and two noble souls were united.

“Would Lady Melville extend the good-will which she feels towards my family, to one who is come so late to claim it?” said he, at last, with a trembling voice.

“It would be difficult to regard you as a stranger, my lord. The love which you enjoy in your family keeps you present, though absent. I could relate something of you to yourself, were you become strange to yourself,” added she, smiling.

“Oh,” cried Richmond, in a lively tone, “you must not doubt. He is not most truthful who does not confess that he knows little of himself. But will you really instruct the estranged person, if I beg for this instruction?”

“Lord Richmond,” answered the lovely maiden, “I have heard much of the great art of hiding truth; but till now I have made so little progress therein, that you have a great chance of hearing it from me in time.”

“May that beautiful mouth never be desecrated by so false an art,” spoke a manly voice behind Richmond’s back, before he could answer.

“Amen,” said Lady Mary, smiling, and looking up innocently; while in the same moment Richmond met the embrace of the amiable Lord Ormond, who had entered unperceived by the lively busy group. Soon was the balcony filled with guests, attracted by the news of Richmond’s arrival; and Lovelace appeared with a request from the two duchesses for him to adjourn to the ball-room, which he gladly accepted. This room was a wide hall, opening to the park, used for different games, especially that of throwing the ball, whence its name. The spacious grass-plot before it was also thus used, and near it was the shooting gallery, containing all kinds of arms.

To-day the games took place on the grass-plot, and all appeared particularly joyous. They amused themselves with archery, in which the ladies joined; and when Richmond was released from his attendance on the two duchesses in the hall, he also joined them.

Lady Mary, accustomed from her childhood to all bodily exercises, had gained the victory over all, whether ladies or gentlemen. This was changed on Richmond's arrival, who hit the centre at the first shot, and afterwards sent an arrow from the cross-bow through the hole he had made. Loud applause followed, and fresh attempts, but all fell short, and Richmond was acknowledged conquerer. He appeared outwardly devoted to all the guests; but he could not restrain himself from observing Lady Mary, whose mysterious and strange fate, and influence upon his brother's heart, had awakened his interest in her, which was not diminished by seeing her. Yet notwithstanding the general testimony to her worth, he could not entertain a favourable opinion respecting her; for her statements of her birth and life were not confirmed in any quarter, and gave room to suspect her altogether. His heart and his principles of duty were much wounded by the condition of his brother. The passion to which his noble mind was delivered up, and the resolutions arising from it, so much to the disadvantage of his honour and happiness, increased Richmond's mistrust of this strange nameless being, and raised doubts of her innocence and candour, the stronger, because by them his blame towards his brother was lightened, and he appeared led astray by her. The only thing he could not doubt, was her beauty; but this also influenced him against her, as only by means of this could she have seduced his brother. Hating, above all things, to see this goodly gift to woman used to allure men, although his sense of justice precluded the idea that it was so in this case, he yet tried to believe it possible, and determined to watch her closely.

But Richmond found himself attracted unawares by her appearance, and in a few hours he had secretly retracted much that he had earlier thought. Her eye had none of that vain bashfulness, with which those conscious of their beauty meet the gaze of men: clear and open, she met every eye, looking up to all with the freedom of a child. She had no idea of those acquired manners, by which women behave differently to men and to their own sex. Her friendliness stepped forward without the sad shrinking of the feelings, which, with the fear of an unknown evil, threatens the innocence of

the heart, even before guilt has come into contact with it. The guileless curiosity with which she regarded Richmond, whilst speaking to him, did indeed deviate from his idea of the proper reserve of a young woman; but it did not displease him: it even led him to think he must correct his ideal after this picture of simple nature. Altogether, the girl filled him with astonishment.

A sudden storm sent the company into the magnificent room we have described. The young people took possession of the cabinet, and Lady Mary leaned by the glass door which was opposite to the picture of the Queen of Scots. Lord Richmond could not resist a comparing look, and, turning to Lord Ormond, he expressed his astonishment at the great resemblance between the two.

"It has been perceived by all," answered the earl, turning towards the picture of the queen; "and if you, who have so long studied the portrait, confirm it, we may safely trust our own judgment."

Mary's attention was attracted by this conversation.

"Permit me," said Richmond, "to express to you my surprise at your perfect likeness to this beautiful picture."

"It is not the first time I have heard this. I know it," said she quietly, with a sorrowful glance to the picture; and as it represented the highest beauty, her acknowledgment of the likeness seemed to express a tolerable consciousness of her own loveliness.

Richmond felt this with the hating temper of a man who would not omit to awaken this consciousness by flattering words, yet who regrets rather than blames the vanity of woman. It appeared to him so difficult to resemble this picture: a few hours before, he had thought it impossible. He had now acknowledged the likeness; but nevertheless it wounded him to see it received as something certain and long known. He would willingly, at this moment, have forgotten both himself and the object; and it would have been easy to divine the cause which had produced the coldness of his manner, had the lady remarked it; but her thoughts had taken a far different turn. She left her place, and sat down on a stool under the picture. This movement showed the likeness still more strongly; but Richmond, who thought it intentional, was turning away in anger,

when Lady Mary, wholly absorbed in the picture, said, in a sorrowful tone,

"How often did my dear relatives rejoice in the happy accident of this resemblance! They dressed my hair like that of the queen, with the little lace cap; they adorned me after the fashion of that time; and made me walk, stand, and sit down, as her friends and attendants recollected to have seen her, though only my father, Lord Melville, knew her. He used to talk of her for hours; for he was her page at the time when, with ample right, she adorned her brow with the threefold crown."

"Certainly," said Lord Ormond, "this unhappy woman is still a highly distinguished and attractive person; and the enthusiastic attachment with which she inspired her friends and attendants, increases the doubt whether her sorrowful fate were deserved."

"How deeply her fate has affected me," said Lady Mary, raising her sorrowfully downcast eyes. "How have I wearied my childish thoughts with plans by which she might have been saved! How have I loved her! All the good which I was able to acquire may be imputed to her. When they trusted me with the secretly reserved happiness of the resemblance, how was I moved! Why was I not in existence when she languished in prison at Tewkesbury? I would have gained access to her; and, could she have escaped in my clothes, I would have fallen on the scaffold instead of her."

"In truth, Lady Melville," exclaimed the young widowed Marchioness of Danville, "your generous enthusiasm is thirty years too late, and is, therefore, a convenient tribute of thankfulness for the felicity of resembling a beautiful woman, who, like the Grecian Helen, brought fire and sword into the world."

"You are right, my lady," replied Lady Mary, awakened from her childish dream by the tone of palpable ungraciousness. "This is a useless, or, as you say, a convenient enthusiasm. In vain should I have lived at that time. How could that, in which the nobles of the land did not succeed, have been accomplished by a weak maiden, through the accidental appearance of a likeness? But I loved her earlier than I knew my features, and felt myself drawn towards her

in my heart. I was conscious of the first influence which spoke warning to me, appearing out of my own features. I felt almost ashamed of the happiness of being like her. I feared to be destined to stricter accountableness. And," continued she, smiling, "I wished to be like the costly vessels which break as soon as a drop of poison is poured into them."

A pause ensued, during which those who surrounded her regarded her with different feelings, but all with sympathy. Lord Ormond pressed Richmond's arm, and the flush of deep emotion rested on his noble face; while Olivia Dorset turned her moistened eyes, now on the lady, now on Lord Ormond, and then on Richmond, whose countenance no longer wore an unpleasant expression.

But while these men, visibly affected, and honouring her for her feeling, could make no reply, no tender consideration touched the soul of Lord Membroke, who, approaching her quickly, began to assure her, with the careless words of a man of the world, that Mary Stuart was born and had died at the right time; for beauty had adorned her with a more victorious crown than that of her regal state.

The lady immediately arose; and as she stood up, and threw a quick, proud look upon the handsome lord, so accustomed to conquer, she appeared even more to resemble the royal Mary, whose high spirit adversity had no power to bend. Slightly raising her beautiful eyebrows, and taking Anna Dorset's arm, she stopped him with a gesture of her hand, saying, "Forbear, my lord. You have not judgment, as I understand it. I must therefore pardon you, if you annoy me; for we are strangers."

Lord Membroke sought to conceal his wounded pride by applauding this bold speech and praising her wit; while the proud girl disappeared in the next room.

When the company separated, Lord Ormond waited in a hall on the ground-floor till Richmond should join him in a confidential conversation, for which each longed. Lord Ormond was the near relative of Lady Dorset, but much younger, being only thirty, and

held in the highest estimation. As chamberlain to the king, a place conferred upon him, although an Irish peer, he was compelled to reside almost constantly in London. The only recompense for this restraint was the house of his relative, Lord Dorset's position also rendering a residence in London necessary. Lady Dorset was a reserved and timid woman, scarcely able to enter fully into the interests of her husband, whose attention was wholly devoted to his duties at court; and, with his entire approbation, she relied upon Lord Ormond for her guidance in those details of domestic life and feelings, which were equally new to her, and beneath the dignity of her husband. The education of his two daughters might have turned Lord Dorset's thoughts more towards his home; but he cared little for them, their birth having twice disappointed his hopes of an heir. Besides the fault of having no son, his wife appeared to him the most useless companion a man could have for a wife; and concluding that his daughters would resemble her, he was satisfied in the assurance that Lord Ormond would be her counsellor, should anything uncommon occur.

He was, nevertheless, not so short-sighted as to impute to his own education of his daughters the Duke of Nottingham's proposal of his eldest son for Anna. He accepted it, subject to the consent of the young people, with the compassionate smile of a superior man, who thought it a convenient arrangement. It rejoiced him as giving no trouble, and if he at all regarded the feelings of his daughter in the matter, it was merely by supposing her as quiet and unassuming as her mother. To inquire about her future husband, further than his title, income, and situation at court, would have appeared to him unnecessary; and Lord Ormond found it the more requisite to perform the duty of a near relative in this matter, from having discovered, that although the daughters had none of the pride and haughtiness of their father, their gentle mother no more understood them than she did her husband. By a bitter disappointment in love, Lord Ormond had been led to adopt a grave life of inward reflection, at a much earlier period than his years made natural. He thus appeared older than he was; for passion had, for a time, lost her sway over him, and that at an age when the battle

is generally yet to be fought. Having succeeded in raising himself from grief to perfect resignation, he hoped to have placed a barrier between himself and a return to that passionate state of feeling upon which, in after years, he could not reflect without shuddering, conscious that, whilst under its influence, he was estranged from heaven and from himself. His excellent nature willingly yielded itself up to general interests, while his unselfishness readily granted the smallest demands upon his assistance or sympathy.

The children of Lord Dorset attracted Lord Ormond by the consciousness of being useful to them. When he returned to London, Anna was fourteen, and Olonia ten years of age. Although perhaps as sincerely attached to him as her sister, he saw that he should never obtain so much influence over the former as over the latter. Anna's character having been formed without assistance or guidance, it would, at the age at which he again met her, be impossible to lead it back within the bounds which appeared necessary to her dangerous talents. Her heart did not act with sufficient strength to hold the equipoise of her haughty activity of mind; and the consequence was, an increasing egotism, extreme pride, and a passionate desire for the pleasures of life. Ormond, moved by the dangerous condition of this beautiful being, wished to let her faults oppose each other; and having won her attachment by kindness, he treated her with an esteem which supposed the good that he wished her to possess, and thus led her to the attainment of it. Her pride had preserved her candour, and her understanding was clear and incorruptible. Conscious that she was not truly what her beloved relative supposed, her feelings stimulated her really to deserve his honoured approbation. This habit of self-watchfulness, and her subsequent rising love for the Duke of Nottingham, made her all that her excellent friend desired, by restraining her self-confidence, and binding with a gentle chain the heart of the hitherto untamed being.

Very different was the feeling of Ormond towards Olonia, who was attached to him with the whole fulness of her affectionate heart. Looking with delight, yet with secret care, upon the strength of her feelings, he saw the dangers which surround such a

temperament; and his affection for her bore the character of that pity with which we love those who we think are destined to a hard fate. In opposition to her sister, the danger to Olonia arose from the unthinking power of her heart, in stifling her understanding. Ormond assisted in her education: from him she received her lectures, notes, and models for drawing. The division of her time, work, and pleasures, all were arranged by him; and at length he loved this creature, who lived but in him. Olonia was very beautiful, and, if capricious and impetuous, so much the more interesting in this singularity.

Ormond retained the sweet pupil still near him: her future lot filled him with care, and he knew but one man to whom he could grant her. This favourite as a man—what Olonia was as a woman—was no other than Lord Richmond. Lord Archibald had likewise wished this choice for his nephew and future heir; and it required all the influence of Ormond to prevent the young people from being contracted before they had become more nearly acquainted. The presence of all parties at Burton Hall, whither he also, with the permission of the king, (who had willingly given him the mission to the family of Nottingham,) had betaken himself, offered the opportunity of watching the hearts of the two young persons. Occupied by these thoughts, he awaited his friend, when the doors suddenly opened, and the young and lovely Marchioness of Danville stepped in, and, conducted by a page, entered the gallery, in her way towards her own apartment.

On meeting Lord Ormond she gave a loud shriek, and her gestures of astonishment seemed to her so becoming, that she protracted them beyond what was proper. The fact of Lord Ormond being rich, noble, and distinguished by all personal advantages, could not be overlooked by this cunning woman. The fate of the lady had been unfortunate. She was married to Lord Danville in her fourteenth year; and though lately a widow, and possessing a good fortune, the young mourner wished to make a second choice more according to the hopes of her youth. Though Lord Membroke showed himself ready to receive her wealth with her hand, and though she would not resign the pleasure of having him as her

admirer, she could not help seeing that Lord Ormond was the better match, and she spared no pains to constrain him.

"Ah," cried she, "my Lord Ormond, you are much to blame thus to have frightened a poor trembling woman like me. How could I imagine that you were here?"

"I regret, my lady," said he, stepping politely towards her, "that my presence is so unexpected; but allow me to give you my arm, to conduct you to your apartments."

This was most agreeable to the lady; and without saying more, his lordship began to lead her along the gallery, but with a degree of formal politeness that at once destroyed all the hopes she had built upon a meeting, which, however interesting it might have seemed in its commencement, had now failed in its object, and must pass unnoted. The cool, polite words of Ormond led to no scene; and thus had they reached the gallery in which were the rooms of Lady Denville, when the thoughts of both were attracted by a spectacle before their eyes.

They beheld a lady hasten along the gallery, and, by her side, a man in earnest conversation, whom both knew to be Lord Membroke. Presently the lady stood still, and then turned, as if she wished to leave her companion. Lord Membroke kneeled, appearing to ask her sympathy. The lady stooped, whether to repel or to hasten to his request, remained undecided; for both now arose, alarmed by seeing Lord Richmond, who was about to join Lord Ormond, and had nearly reached them, having given warning of his approach by his intentional loud steps. The lady disappeared by a door, and Lord Membroke hastened to greet Richmond.

"The hypocrite!" cried the Marchioness. "Pride before the eyes of the world, and an intrigue with this unprincipled lord!"

"Whom do you mean?" asked Ormond, agitated. "How can you decide who this lady was? The moonlight only slightly illumines the gallery, and we may mistake, sorely mistake her."

"Mistake!" cried the lady, proudly and coldly, and drawing her arm from his. "Mistake! Where were then, for the second time, this newly-arrisen Mary Stuart, whom you must know well enough, for your eyes continually follow her, and your fear for her disguise

betrays itself. Yes, believe me, my lord, this heiress of Mary Stuart's beauty is also the heiress of her vices. I saw through her long ago."

"For God's sake, my lady, moderate yourself, and be not so cruelly hasty. It cannot be—you surely err—it was not Lady Melville."

The angry lady looked scornfully upon the earl, as she smiled bitterly. "Our dispute will soon be settled. There comes Lord Richmond, and he will decide who this doubtful lady is. Ask Lord Richmond: he was quite near to them. My steps are arrested by astonishment and displeasure. How is it possible that Lady Melville could consent to this lover? Tell us, did you hear what she said? Would he embrace her? Did she hear his prayer?"

During these stormy questions, the lady came nearer Richmond. But their impertinence did not extract the desired confirmation. Richmond's good feeling saw with displeasure the violent exultation with which she strove to harm the blamed one, and he was resolved not to aid her in the attempt.

"I recognised Lord Membroke," answered he, in a quiet tone; "but as regards the lady in whose company he was, I cannot judge, for, as your ladyship must already have remarked, the light in the gallery is too uncertain."

A short, bitter laugh broke from the greatly disappointed lady. "Now, my lords," cried she violently, "if it is worth having both your eyes to admire this adventuress, so be sure that my eyes are sharp enough to know the pretended Lady Melville, and I know enough of her. I wish you pleasant dreams," added she, with a sneer, and disappeared by the way which led to her apartment.

The two friends returned in silence to the hall in which they had agreed to meet, but without thinking of their proposed confidential conversation. They walked several times up and down. At last Ormond seized Richmond's arm, saying, with an agitated voice, "Speak, Richmond! Is there no doubt? Are you certain? Was it she?"

"It was," answered he gravely; "for she is not to be mistaken."

"Great God!" exclaimed Ormond, "filled the breast which being to the worthless fellow? I can see the knelt down, her Danville says. A sorrowful fate must visit of gratitude and lorn, without any natural protector: she and when she rose ended. What a horrible thought if this seemed to ask her enticing her."

"But," said Lord Richmond, "are you not rather more deserves your good opinion? Have you so closely examined your daily intercourse? I cannot yet trust her, although I awake ledge that her lot is a hard one. The smallest doubt in the past, woman, and disfigures her, as a creeping weed does the beautiful building, and she has at least created doubt. but solve the riddle to which her life, and her appearance lead us, lead? Can you, if you know her, raise yourself above suspicion?"

"I know the circumstances are mysterious," replied Ormond, "and I know not how to solve them; yet I have no suspicion of her. Become acquainted with her, and then let her bear witness to the unspotted purity of her soul. She feels the grief which is incident to her situation, only as a child, who has grown up in abundance of love, feels its sudden isolation: the idea of doubt and suspicion lies far removed from her. She has the firmly-grounded pride of innocence, and yet a touching confidence in truth, for the discovery of which she thinks we have all done sufficient. She lives without fear before us, and is anxious about the disclosure of her mysterious life, because she thinks of the uneasiness of her friends at her disappearance, and would esteem herself happy to be able to guide us to those whom she still hopes are alive. She is not uneasy on our account, because of the disappearance of those friends, but merely on theirs. And who, that knows her education, can avoid bearing testimony to its elevated character, and the sound judgment by which it has been directed? Nature has not exhausted herself in the lovely exterior, for every feeling of her breast is free, noble, and grand; and yet how completely has her mind been stored by the highest wisdom, and with the greatest reverence for this natural character! I know not the plans or calculations of those by whom she was educated;

betrays itself. Yes, but she appears to have been brought up Stuart's beauty is also that her disposition has received a long ago."

development. She has the delicate manners
 "For God's sake, an brought up in the highest class of life; cruelly hasty. It she knew nothing of forms, and as if these Melville."

from her pure feminine feeling. She is
 The angry lad is a child, and at home in every situation; but bitterly. "Or moves her quickly, for she has a heart capable of Richmond, and a true pride shows itself in all her actions. Richmond first feels how truly and naturally she is cultivated, and astonish with joy the beautiful disposition, which leaves her un- ville clear, and quiet, under all circumstances. No, I cannot give say belief in her pure descent. We shall yet see some light own upon her. Heaven grant that this, its favourite, may never e exposed to the injustice of misinterpretation!"

Richmond, warmed by his zeal, pressed the hand of his friend. He had seized the beautiful picture, which Ormond's words had brought before him, with an indescribable and unknown feeling, rising from the depths of his spirit; and he felt himself too much agitated by it to persevere in the object of this meeting.

Lord Ormond appeared touched, as if Richmond had spoken. Kindly pressing each other's hands, they parted; and each hastened, busied in his thoughts, to welcome solitude.

Ormond did not remember the object of his interview with Richmond, until, on entering his room, his eye perceived the evidences of Olonia's careful hand. He stood still, and overpowered by regret, he pressed his hands to his forehead.

Richmond also retired to his apartment, and sighing more than once, repeated to himself—"My poor brother!"

filled the breast which she knelt down, her

CHAPTER XXVII. of gratitude and

and when she rose

The circumstance which had produced seemed to ask her amongst her friends and enemies had distressed her thoughts, and we find her seated before the table in another more apartment, whilst her attendant is employed in brushing her brown hair, which hung like a mantle over her shoulders. Her head rested heavily on her hand, and the good old Errol vainly attempted to draw her young mistress into conversation.

"You are fatigued, dear lady," at length she said, "but I will remove your head, I will soon finish your hair, and then you can retire to rest."

A sweet smile was the only answer, but she placed her hand upon her knee, while the good old Errol hastened to finish her task.

"No wonder that you are so weary," said she, still endeavouring to lead her to talk; "you have had so much excitement this afternoon. Certainly no one can excel you amongst the young ladies, and had not Lord Richmond arrived, you would have conquered the gentlemen also; but he, the dear child, even from his youth, was always the most skilful and clever."

"Lord Richmond," repeated the hitherto silent lady; "you must know him well: you have been all your life at Godweay Castle?"

"Yes, my lady, and Anne, my younger sister, was his nurse. He was a beautiful child; and to-day, when he over-matched you by shooting through the silken cord, his looks reminded me of the happy days of his childhood."

"But where were you, Errol? I did not perceive you whilst we were engaged in the sports."

"Master Lovelace gave us permission to go into the upper gallery, which overlooks the great hall, for we were all anxious to see the young lord."

By this time Errol had finished her task; and as the young lady did not require her further services, she retired, happy that her mistress had been as kind as usual.

betrays itself. Yes, 'The moment of prayer was come; and Stuart's beauty is also should banish her strange mood, she knelt long ago."

But she could not pray: her feelings appeared her mind absorbed in contemplation. Like cruelly hasty. It which is already prepared for the approaching Melville."

Business shows that the time has not yet arrived. The angry in repose, before the consciousness of its feelings bitterly. "At length she raised her hands in prayer, and Richmond the depth of her heart, "Lord God, my father, look Richmond me, and be gracious to me!"

As her beautiful head sank upon the desk, she kissed the Greek Testament which lay upon it, and betook herself to her couch. The tears, with which she had struggled from shame, now flowed freely, and she no longer strove to restrain them; but, whilst blaming herself for weeping without reason, like a child she cried herself to sleep.

The sun of England shines but seldom, in early morning, with the clear colourless light which it displays in other countries: enveloped in fog and moist vapour, it assumes a roseate hue, which, although less cheering, is perhaps not less lovely. On the following morning, its magic light penetrated, in many-coloured rays, through the gothic windows of the room of the sleeper. Upon the polished table, on the walls, and on the floor, the light from the variegated panes appeared to have painted numerous flowers, which nodded to awaken the slumberer, and as the undrawn curtains of the couch freely admitted their entrance, the beautiful girl was wholly covered by these rays.

After attempting to withdraw her eyelids from the light, and placing her hands before her eyes in order to shut it out, the lady awoke. As she gradually recovered her consciousness, she felt an inexpressible sweetness; and like a child who recognises a favourite toy, she looked smiling around the room, and saw the well-known objects clad in various colours. Even her white dress was changed, and longing to breathe the fresh pure air, she arose from her couch. Refreshed by her sweet sleep, she either no longer remembered the feelings of the previous evening, or she thought to banish them by

a little reflection. A life of happy joyfulness filled the breast which was yesterday so oppressed, and now, when she knelt down, her words of prayer did not fail her. A hymn of gratitude and love poured from her overflowing heart to God, and when she rose from her knees, inspired by joy and devotion, she seemed to ask her good Errol, "Is it not a happiness to live?" She caressed her affectionate face, and no child could inquire after its mother more tenderly, than she did respecting the welfare of her attendant.

As she advanced to the window, the evidences of nature's waking life everywhere attracted her attention. The summer was long past, but the autumn had not lost its peculiar pleasures, and she heard the cry of the heron as he rose from the moor, the soft tones of the thrush, and the shrill-call of the sea-mew. She smiled on perceiving the swallows peeping out of the cornices of the windows, and knocking their heads before they could effect their exit; her soul longed to be in the open air with them, and she hastened to her toilet.

She selected a dress suitable to the season: it was of rich black velvet, embroidered in gold, corresponding with the little net which covered her shining head, and over which was placed a cap, surmounted by a feather. During these operations, she had several times heard a rustling outside her door, which seemed to chide her for her delay, and at the same time to demand her welcome. Mary looked with a smile at Errol, and then nodded to the door, which she opened, and Gaston hurried in, impatient to receive her caresses. After she had greeted him, they hastened together towards the lovely park.

The morning was delightful. A brilliant hue appeared over every object, and she felt herself almost borne along by the balmy air, which seemed to inspire her with hope and courage. Her mind was freed from that grief, which, whilst pressing upon it, produced images of those dear ones lost to her, and darkened her early fate. She still thought of them, but the remembrance now increased the innocence and happiness of her heart, and gave to them the semblance of mild, cheerful-looking angels, who stooped to protect and bless her.

"Yes, I must be happy," she exclaimed, "for these wish me to be so;" and she saw, for the first time, that happiness arises from the proper development of the heart and mind of man, and she felt that it must be the task of her whole life to attain this perfection. She was conscious that she had not thought sufficiently of this, but she resolved henceforth to atone for her past neglect. Her grief seemed conquered, or at least subdued to a childlike resignation, and she thanked God in her heart for allowing her the happiness of living. "Of living!" echoed her heart, "and that with the noblest and best of mankind." She sent a thousand greetings to him, as, ascending an eminence, she perceived the castle above the trees in the park. Ah! to be one day united with him, seemed now an intelligible yet unutterable happiness.

A rustic bench encircled the trunk of a stately oak, whose branches shaded the eminence upon which Lady Mary took her usual morning walk. This spot commanded an extensive view, which had for her peculiar charms, for she fancied that she could perceive, in the far distance, the lofty Cheviots, the boundaries of Scotland. The Solway, on the shores of which she had played as a child, appeared to be hidden behind the hills; but those distant lines, which she imagined the mountains of that beautiful country she had ever regarded as her fatherland, called up pictures of her home, and she felt it a daily duty at least to look towards them, as if thereby greeting a dear friend.

This morning, as on many others, she was obliged to console herself by merely gazing in that direction, for the horizon was obscured by a veil of fog. But even this was enjoyment; for the mist resembled a vast ocean, whilst the point on which she stood was brilliantly lighted by the sun. All was consolation and joy for her to-day, and, as the dark shadows were dispelled, her heart was filled with boundless delight.

Gaston, who knew from custom the extent of her walk, had preceded her, and now sat like a sentinel at her feet, looking as if she understood all around him. Presently he pricked up his ears, and turned away growling: his mistress's caresses did not appease him, and jumping up, he darted suddenly along the path towards the

wood. Lady Mary watched him, and saw him intercept the progress of a man, whose approach to the hill he seemed anxious to prevent; for at every attempt that he made to advance, Gaston growled terribly. The lady, fearless for herself, but alarmed by the animal's violence, called him to return to her. Gaston obeyed, but with apparent reluctance, and in a few moments he had laid himself at her feet.

Lady Mary was so wholly occupied in restraining Gaston, that she did not perceive the intruder, until, attracted by his shadow before her, she recognised, with great displeasure, the person of Lord Membroke. Those who had seen the change in his features; and her form would have remembered Lord Ormond's words; for with a blushing face and a piercing glance she drew herself up so proudly, that it seemed as if she rebuked him menacingly. The more she had resigned herself to her sweet feelings, and the more the truth had faded into dreaminess, so much the further from her was any remembrance of this man, who had given her so much cause for anger, and had invariably excited her suspicion.

Lord Membroke did not appear to notice the lady's mien, but approaching with feigned reverence and humility; and greeting her respectfully, he said, "I must thank your ladyship for my deliverance from an enemy; for in my surprise at being so nearly strangled during a peaceful walk, assuredly I knew not how to defend myself."

"I was not aware that it was you, when I called Gaston off," said Lady Mary, turning coldly from him, and fixing her eyes on the landscape before her. "It was a natural and perhaps unnecessary act of sympathy, for Gaston never hurts any one, and was only endeavouring to keep this spot free for me."

"Your words seem to imply that I may now depart, in order that Gaston's efforts may not be in vain," said he in an ironical tone: "had you known it was my threat that he, had assailed; probably you would not have recalled him. My lady, permit me to say, that your pride does you more injury than you imagine. You hate no one so much, not even the poor Membroke, as to bear to see

him in danger, when you can prevent it by the sound of your sweet voice."

There was too much truth in this reproach not to touch Lady Mary's candid and modest mind. She accused herself of having displayed an unfeminine coldness, and forgetting the previous ground for her reserve, she turned to him, and, in a tone of more politeness, said, "My lord, you do not mistake my heart, and I hope it will never change from general to exclusive benevolence. Should the words which, in my first surprise, I made use of, express any other feeling than benevolence, I pray you pardon me."

Lord Membroke inwardly exulted in having brought this proud being into disadvantageous contrast with himself, and had Lady Mary seen the malicious smile with which he listened to her, she would have repented of her words.

"What, my lady," answered he, gently drawing back, "what, that you can say, is harder than the mistrust with which you treat those whom your charms have transformed from secret ambassadors into ardent worshippers? You have commanded me to be silent," continued he, as the lady prepared to descend the hill, while he respectfully followed her closely, in order that she might hear him. "I will obey your commands, so long as my weak spirit can; but I conjure you, yet once more, turn not your confidence from me, because of my involuntary offence. I am the only one in whom your unfortunate uncle confides, to give him the last remaining consolation of news from you. He is persecuted, and, beset by dangers, is obliged to seek safety in flight. Think, then, of what you do in refusing to permit me to conduct you to him."

"My lord," said Lady Mary, whilst she continued her walk, "you treat me in an unpardonable manner. Your persecution prevents my thinking of anything but how I may withdraw myself from your presence; and I am certain that my uncle would never have chosen you as his agent for conducting me to him, had he imagined that it would bring me into contact with a man who begins by making me the object of his dishonourable persecutions. But without reference to the fact, that the confidence of the noblest of men

ought to have moved you to treat me with the greatest respect, I must despise a man who takes advantage of a situation like mine, and, whilst I am deprived of my nearest protector, insults me by proposals, on which I cannot think without regarding your approach as that of a poisonous reptile. It was not until after you had felt my just indignation, that you assumed the character of an ambassador, and, under the authority of a name sacred to me, sought to regain my confidence. Perhaps I was wrong in even once listening to you; but I am young, and little accustomed to guide myself; and, besides, I was too much overpowered by the idea of losing this last remaining source of protection, to be able to treat you with the distrust you merited. You have filled me with unknown fears; you have extorted from me a promise of silence, which I now feel burdensome as an insult to this noble family, whom I believe to be worthy of perfect confidence, and who would shield me from every danger. But be assured that my heart rejects this concealment, and the duchess shall this day know what you require of me, and the authority you wish to exercise over me. She will examine all; and if your pretensions are founded on truth, then shall you find yourself among the suite which she will appoint to conduct me to my uncle."

"Well," cried Membroke angrily, for he had long resolved to place before her another temptation, "follow your own haughty inclinations, and let it be yourself alone who gives the final blow to your uncle's fate. For rest assured, that the first word that betrays me to this woman as the secret friend of your uncle, will force me to name him to her, and to discover his abode, and that it is he who is concerned in the affairs of Lord Bristol. One word would consign him to the scaffold."

Lady Mary involuntarily shuddered. As she turned her beautiful face towards him, he saw that it was pale, and that her eyes were straining with apprehension.

"Yes," continued Membroke, overjoyed by the effect he had produced, "yes, you will not be spared. You now know the perilous situation of your uncle, and by what means you can save him. You have heard the name of Buckingham, and must foresee that

your relations are bound to his illustrious race. Lord Bristol is returned: he seeks to justify himself respecting the Spanish occurrences, whilst, at the same time, he accuses Buckingham. This would succeed, could Bristol discover your uncle, and carry him to court. Enough: there will be witnesses against him; for his noble confiding mind had led him to act in measures which were adopted with good intentions; but they totally failed, and their discovery would bring death to all who participated in them. These related to the dissolution of the Spanish match and the approaching war. The parliament is now assembled, and Lord Bristol must prove his accusations if he would not bring the axe upon his own head. There remains no resource for your uncle but to fly. He is concealed at the borders of the kingdom, where, alone and forsaken, he holds himself in readiness to depart to a foreign land, should Bristol's exertions to discover his retreat be crowned with success. The whole family will assist in these inquiries, for they are well aware of the earl's perilous situation, unless these proofs are forthcoming. Go, then; tell Bristol's daughter, where he is, where she would seek at the price of her life; and if they are fallen upon him, do me at least the justice to say that I warned you."

Lord Membroke spoke with the full conviction that he had aroused her fears; but his calculations were always frustrated by such a female character as that of Lady Mary. Mastering the horror of the first moment, her mind, accustomed to reflection, and supported by distrust of the speaker, refused to give credit to his story.

"I cannot think," she replied, "that the situation of my uncle is such as you represent it. I can never believe that this proud and pure character could be involved in an act which forces him to so disgraceful a concealment; and, even had he been wrong, he would never have permitted another to suffer for his faults. Lord Bristol would have found in him a defender, even though the axe hung over his head. Ah!" cried she, inspired by the testimony which her memory bore to his virtue. "you have invented this story as a means of removing me from those who can help and protect me against you. God forgive you, for having thus misused a name so sacred to me."

She hastened along the path, which ended in a broad shady walk, leading to the breakfast-hall, where all the guests and the members of the family were assembled.

"Now God preserve you, you obstinate girl," said Membroke; "and do thou, my unfortunate friend, forgive me for having reposed thy holy confidence in so disdainful a being, upon whose affection thou hadst so fully relied."

Lady Mary stood still; for, in spite of the constraint she had imposed upon herself, in order to preserve her calmness of mind, her anxiety was fully roused, and could not be so easily quieted. Membroke's last reproach had deeply wounded her, and she said, with a trembling voice,

"God is my witness that I would go with you, even on foot, like a beggar, to the furthest end of the earth, to seek and to serve him—could I believe all that you have told me; but——"

She was silent. Grief and disappointment were so eloquently depicted in those lovely features, that even Membroke was touched, and he inwardly resolved that she should be his wife; and having made this virtuous resolution, he determined so much the more boldly to use every imaginable means to get her into his power.

"How can I believe these assertions?" said he, with undisguised arrogance; "for certainly your sympathy for your natural relations appears to yield to that which you feel for this Nottingham family, who are but strangers to you."

On the previous day, Mary would have repulsed this unjust reproach with indignation, but, from some unknown cause, she now only inwardly trembled.

"I know from your uncle," continued Lord Membroke, "that you are unacquainted with his name. You mistake if you suppose him to be an Earl of Mar. You have already begun to doubt on this point, and you suspect that your protectors are yet more incredulous. Why, then, was your interest so lukewarm, that you would not understand my relation? The whole must be known to me."

"Remember, my lord," said she proudly, whilst her features

glowed with indignation, "that I have never permitted a word to escape my lips except what your importunities have forced from me—that I have never asked a question which could lead to the prolongation of the hated constraint caused by your presence—that I have never even supposed it possible that you could know anything of those whom I honour too highly to believe that you can be their ambassador. A name, however important, when pronounced by you, would have no more influence with me, than that which I have already known as assumed or fictitious. Relinquish, then, the confidence with which you seem inclined to call me to account. You are, and will ever remain, a total stranger to me."

She hastened on, and Membroke felt with great dissatisfaction how much more difficult every step became to him. He tried to overtake her, and, in spite of Gaston, who pressed between him and his mistress, he came quite close to her, hoping that they would be seen by those in the breakfast-room. This would favour his design of letting it appear that there was a confidential understanding between them, which he hoped would shake the good opinion of her protectors, and thus render her again helpless and isolated.

"Your anger," he began, "although I am always its object, bears witness, against your inclination, to the kindness of your heart; and this was necessary to me, for I can soon give you a proof of the effect of which I am certain. I am in hourly expectation of the arrival of my page from London, where he resides, and who will confirm my statement. Till then, my request shall not be repeated; and, for the sake of the memory which you hold so dear, be silent towards those who appear to you so worthy of confidence. Should my page return without bringing me any tidings that can satisfy you, you shall then fix the day of my departure, and I can only recommend you to the protection of heaven."

Lady Mary did not answer, but endeavoured to pass him, for they were now within sight of the windows, and she saw the family at breakfast.

"What!" cried the Marchioness of Danville, "do I see aright? Is not that our little mystery, Lady Melville? and, if I mistake not, in the company of him with whom we saw her last night? Yet

they then wanted to prove to me that I saw wrong. Lord Ormond, what will you say, now that the sun, instead of the moon, is in the firmament? Who are those two confidential persons, who are hastening towards us along that walk? Look, Lord Richmond, what do you say?" added she, in bitter mockery, "for I perceive that Lord Ormond's answer dies upon his lips."

"Without doubt," replied Lord Ormond, firmly and coldly, "without doubt those are Lady Melville and Lord Membroke. Lady Melville likes to strengthen her mind in the enjoyment of nature, and to brace her nerves in the morning air, which gives her that vigour of mind and body that so delights us all."

During this discourse Richmond had risen from his seat without speaking, and hastened to open the door for the Lady Mary. Ormond's attention was at this moment attracted by Olonia, who had left her seat with a strange manner, and having saluted the duchess, disappeared through the open door. When Mary stood at the entrance of the saloon, her clear eye glancing on all present, it seemed to her as if, in the presence of these noble men, the demon that had followed her had lost its power over her. The burden which had nearly crushed her heart was removed, and the hope of finding peace, happiness, and protection among those before her, came like an angel's greeting to cheer her.

With childlike reverence she approached the two duchesses, who sat by the fire, at the upper end of the room, and kissing their hands, received from each a kindly greeting.

"Here, my lady," cried Lady Danville, "here is room enough for you. You make it difficult for any one to enjoy your company. When I saw you with Gaston in the park, I tried to overtake you, that you might teach me the pleasures of an autumn morning; but I soon found that you had chosen another pupil for to-day; and when I saw Lord Membroke hasten after you, I feared to disturb you, and returned to my warm room. I should on no account have relished such a long walk of instruction as you have taken your companion."

Mary had approached the lady at the commencement of this address, but as it proceeded she stood still, and beheld with astonishment

nishment the bitter smile which overspread the features of the marchioness. She did not expect such ill-humour, and she doubted whether she heard rightly; but when she perceived that her meeting with Lord Membroke was looked upon as concerted, she felt herself agitated with scorn; and as she drew herself up with a dignified air, her cheeks were suffused with a brilliant red, whilst with a proud glance, that astonished Richmond, she said,

"I must suppose, my lady, that you jest. But, in your lively humour, you seem not to be aware that you have chosen a subject, which, even when mentioned only in jest, affronts a woman; and I regret that I should be compelled thus to remind you of your misconception."

"Pardon, proud child!" replied the marchioness, endeavouring to restrain her anger: "if you expect to find me as curious a scholar as Lord Membroke, you will be mistaken. Permit me, then, to show you your mistake. But you, Lord Membroke, are become cool in your knight's duty. Why do you not confess to us the accident to which your sentimental meeting must be ascribed? Can you not do so?" added she, laughing; for Membroke shrugged his shoulders with a dubious smile.

"How may my mouth contradict what the beautiful Lady Melville has so distinctly explained?" said he.

These words were designedly spoken in a half whisper, but they were distinct enough to be understood by those standing near, and the laugh of the marchioness completed the insult. Happily, Lady Mary had not heard them; for the old duchess, who always kept a watchful eye upon her guests, attracted by the elevated voices at the other end of the room, had sent her page to call her young friend to her side. Already had the lovely girl forgotten all her troubles, and had taken her place beside the old lady, not foreseeing the continuance of an insult which she thought she had sufficiently repulsed.

Richmond followed her. Whatever might have been his inmost feeling at seeing her again with Lord Membroke, whose well-known character would injure the reputation of any woman who appeared to court his acquaintance, the manner in which Lady Melville had

been affected by the insinuations of the malicious marchioness, seemed to him, at all events, revolting. But whilst he thought himself obliged to conceal his own opinion, he could not bear that any one should insult an unprotected creature in the house of one of his relations. Conscious of the respect paid to his character, he contradicted, by his politeness towards the guilty one, all that had just been said. At breakfast, he attended to her with the most amiable gallantry, and the constraint which he imposed upon himself yielded before the pleasure which all felt in Mary's presence. Her mind seemed, on this occasion, to possess a peculiar elasticity, and joy had so completely taken possession of her heart, that it overcame all passing impressions. Her emotions only rendered her more lively, and more attractive than ever. Her wonderfully clear eyes danced in the light of their own brightness, and the play of her features declared her feelings before she could utter them. Richmond could not turn his eyes from her, though he seemed more an observer than an admirer.

"And why was my Mary so angry, when I called her to me?" inquired the old lady affectionately.

Suddenly disturbed in a lively conversation with Richmond by this question, she appeared almost alarmed, and looking down gravely, and blushing, she remained silent.

"I was unpolite," said the old duchess; "I ought not to have disturbed you when you were merry. It was only the curiosity of an old woman that moved me to it, for I cannot allow that anything should vex you, as you are never angry without a cause."

Mary kissed her hand, saying, "the feeling of your protection ought to make me gentle under all circumstances; but I have much to contend with in my impetuous heart."

The old duchess pressed the hand of her darling as a favourable answer; and Lady Melville, turning to Richmond, with the tears in her eyes, said,

"Oh, my lord, how I hate myself for this easily-excited impetuosity, and for being so little able to control it, although I am so conscious of it. We ought not to disregard a premeditated insult, but yet self-defence leaves a thorn behind it, for we seldom retain

our composure, even when we are called upon to defend the right. The shame of others easily enters into our words, and out of our self-defence arises a desire of revenge, which wounds us, and makes us undervalue ourselves."

"Certainly," answered Richmond; "and thus the situation of women is more delicate than that of men. We, in our varied relations of life, are in greater danger of being misunderstood, and must accustom ourselves to be so. We must learn to bear it, in order that the freedom of our actions may not be limited by the dangerous desire to avoid it. Firmly-grounded respect and reverence is often to be attained only by bearing unmerited blame; and it belongs to the courage of true virtue, to trust our vindication silently to that justice, which, in the course of time, is the reward of every true effort. Yet though this principle is of avail in general cases, it is not so to a woman, who suffers too much under the slightest suspicion, not to hasten to cast it from her; and if anger ever be allowable to her sex, it is then.

"Oh, no, no," cried Lady Mary, quickly; "I thought only of the attainment of a softness and dignity of soul which sees in the accuser or calumniator only a sufferer, or one to be pitied. If we can then refrain from anger, our word will bear so much the more the character of conviction. Men should avoid, as the greatest sin, the giving rise to anger in a woman; for even were the greater right on our side, we should have the disadvantage, because we have stepped out of our proper nature. Discord remains within us, though we may have won the most brilliant victory. Oh! if men knew how grateful we are to those, in whose presence we can breathe freely and fearlessly, and can resign ourselves carelessly to our nature, certain of their protection, and of their noble regard to the fine lines of our happy existence!"

Richmond raised his reflective eye to her at these words. An indescribable feeling told him that it was he whom, with such eloquence, she had described. He acknowledged to himself with delight, that she understood and trusted him; and when his glance, animated by this feeling, met hers, her eye fell, veiled by its long, silken lashes.

No time was allowed them to struggle with this embarrassment. The young duchess rose to retire, requesting Richmond to accompany her. He knew that the hour for his heavy task, of revealing to his mother her father's danger, was come, and it required, at the present moment, great self-control to bring his mind into that state of prudence which the affair demanded. He succeeded better than he had expected. He seemed, to-day, to have acquired a new talent—that of being able easily to comprehend the most entangled circumstances. He also perceived that his mother was in good spirits, her anxiety respecting his brother being considerably alleviated; for she had received an affectionate letter from Robert, who had spoken of his union with Anna Dorset with the quiet dignity of decision.

The duchess looked forward with joy to the arrival of her father, and her trust in his high character was so great, that she could not believe he could be harmed by any accusations. Perhaps Richmond ought to have lessened this proud security; but he could not afflict his mother's heart, when she had just been freed from her uneasiness respecting her eldest son. He daily expected further tidings from his uncle, and therefore resolved to leave her in peace a little longer.

His attempt to induce his mother to give him some information respecting Lady Melville was unsuccessful. She answered quietly, that she had reserved to herself some considerations on the subject, and prohibited all endeavours to penetrate the mystery of her former life, since the success of these would be little advantageous to her honour and happiness. She preferred giving her protection without explanation; for the fear which affected the honour of her family had been removed by Robert's good sense and correct principles.

The duchess then mentioned her future daughter-in-law with pleasure, and also talked of the lovely Olonia. She easily perceived that Lord Archibald's views were not shared by Richmond, for he spoke of the blooming girl as of a plaything; and, with that indifference which can be neither praised nor blamed, he listened to the assurances which his mother gave him, of her remarkable qualities of mind and heart.

The duchess was soon silent on this topic, for she regarded this

indifference to a girl, whom she had intended for a daughter-in-law, as an affront to herself and to Olonia, and she could not readily forgive him. She did not take leave of him so kindly as usual ; but he did not observe her coldness, and went away sunk in deep thought, and asking himself why the mention of Lady Melville, who was no longer the cause of her anxiety, should put her so much out humour.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The old duchess wished to retain her guests with her until she could return with the family to Godway Castle, and she was therefore unwearied in providing for them an agreeable variety of pleasure and amusement. This could not fail, for she had the surest means at her command : her cheerfulness animated all, and her smile of approbation rewarded those who had in any way contributed to the amusement of the others. In spite of this banner of joy waving over the party, there were some hearts that did not beat in unison ; and many, oppressed by their own reflections, only preserved that skilful bearing which seeks not to obtrude its own affairs on others.

Lord Ormond was one of the latter class. His feelings had been awakened, and he confessed to himself that Lady Melville had made him familiar with love, which, only a short time before, he had thought could never again have found access to his heart. Now, however, this feeling was seconded by respect and sympathy, which had not been the case in his earlier and unhappy attachment. He had, from the first, pondered upon the difficulties which interpose themselves to a union between one of his own high rank and situation, and an unknown creature, about whose former life hung so much that was doubtful and mysterious.

But there was one difficulty which appeared to him still more formidable : it was whether he, so much her senior, could win the heart of this beautiful young angel ; and he prepared himself for

any sacrifice which such a union might require. If his wife should not be received at court, he resolved to leave London, and reside on his own estate, which he would render worthy of her presence by means of all that cultivation and art could accomplish. But he dreaded to hasten the decisive moment: a thousand scruples, a thousand fears, led him to delay it. He watched her closely, and soon perceived that her childlike repose and her noble equanimity began to give way, and that a melancholy took possession of her, which seemed to indicate some secret grief.

He tried in every way to soothe her, and, without reference to himself, to impart to his expressions a consoling tone. He endeavoured to guard her from the obtrusiveness of others, and to protect her against any misinterpretation to which her sorrowful looks and manner might give rise. On the other hand, she appeared to regard him as a faithful friend; and it seemed to him as if it was only in his presence that she succeeded in regaining that repose which she sought among all around her. How, therefore, could Ormond avoid reliance on these indications for the fulfilment of those hopes which animated him? And yet he dared not lead her to the important conversation. Every trial to obtain her confidence was without success, and especially when he attempted to penetrate the secret of her acquaintance with Lord Membroke, the slightest allusion to which seemed not only to cause her great disquiet, but so much pain that he had no desire to increase it.

But however strong were his feelings, he had been too long accustomed to self-control, and sympathy with others, not to participate in all around him; and his attention was attracted by Olonia, who gave him cause for uneasiness. This sweet impassioned girl appeared agitated beyond all bounds: she seemed in a continual struggle between laughter and tears; and here, too, was he disappointed. He had formerly possessed her entire confidence; but now he was repulsed: at the conclusion of his grave fatherly exhortations to control her excited nature, she would fall weeping, as if in despair, at his feet, and for many days afterwards a look from him was all that was requisite to bring tears into her eyes.

Ever indulging the idea of a union between Richmond and Olonia,

he began to think that her agitation was caused by a feeling of attachment for him; and assured that this feeling would be important for her whole life, he prayed to heaven that she might be happy in her love, for the misfortune of unrequited affection appeared to him especially dangerous to one of her disposition. But regarding Richmond's feelings he was more and more uncertain, as the former had become grave in his demeanour, and held more than usually aloof from all intercourse with the young lady. Ormond's earlier supposition, that Richmond had been penetrated by Lady Mary's charms, did not seem to be correct, for he apparently avoided her, and, burying himself in his own room, spent a great portion of his time in reading and writing. Ormond therefore concluded that his melancholy was to be imputed to the situation of the Earl of Bristol, which became every day more threatening.

A striking event at last led Ormond to take the decisive step towards Lady Melville. The younger part of the company had one morning reached the court of the castle, on their return from their ride, when Lord Membroke, hastening forward, addressed a young man in a travelling dress, who stood waiting among the servants, and who, seizing the earl's bridle, gave him a packet. Lady Melville, who was riding between Ormond and Lady Arabella, now entered the court. As she alighted from her horse, Lord Membroke approached her with a triumphant look, and holding the packet high in the air, called out, significantly,

"I have the honour, my lady, to announce to you, that my page is returned from his journey."

Lady Mary's face became suddenly pale, and when Membroke approached her, with a sudden shriek she fell fainting upon the ground. All was now confusion and alarm. Richmond pushed aside Lord Membroke, who wanted to assist her, and raising her up, he ordered a chair to be brought. She opened her eyes, and saw Richmond; but they immediately closed again, and she seemed deprived of the power of utterance. As soon as the chair was brought, Richmond placed her upon it, and leaving her to the care of the women, he mounted his horse, and rode off slowly in the direction which the party had just quitted.

Lord Ormond passed several hours in his room, in the most violent agitation. He could no longer suffer this beloved being to remain subject to the persecutions of a man, who appeared to exercise some unknown power over her, which she felt herself compelled to acknowledge, although at the same time it filled her mind with dread. He would at once offer her his protection, and, as her betrothed, secure the right to share her sorrows, and to remove from her whatever oppressed her. To be reserved any longer appeared to him cowardly weakness, and, resolute in his purpose, he hastened to inquire after her health.

Meanwhile, Lord Membroke, followed by his page, retired to his apartment. To his unspeakable joy he found enclosed in Buckingham's packet a second letter, sealed with the prince's signet ring, and addressed, "To the Lady Mary Melville." This gave him so much pleasure, that he had nearly forgotten Buckingham's letter, while he gave his page directions which the cunning boy knew indicated a sudden departure. We will, meanwhile, examine the contents of Buckingham's epistle:—

"You have again proved," he wrote, "that you are good for nothing but what lies within the scope of a senseless intrigue with a woman; and could I find another of my creatures to do my business in that old owl's nest, and with those paragons of virtue, the Nottinghams, I would command you to quit the field. For, as you relate the affair, it is only to clear too me that you have intimidated the girl before you have made sure of her. You have forgotten that I not only commanded you to carry her off, but also to remember that she is my niece, who is somewhat too far above you to risk your neck by your usual plans. Enough. You have but one merit—that you, as a degenerate relation of the house of Nottingham, can remain longer among them, and therefore I do not remove you from your office. Hence you are permitted to give me some further proofs of your behaviour, and of your hitherto inexperienced wit.

"Your idea of the letter is not amiss, and if she follows you with her free will, you will thus be protected in case of pursuit; although I acknowledge that it would avail her little in the eyes of the world if she were known to have fled with you. Besides, be-

fore the high areopagus of the Nottinghams, will the niece of Buckingham be estimated at her full value? It is an excellent joke, that I now, without their suspecting it, withdraw an object out of their hands, who would be of great importance to them in the present state of Bristol's affairs. This much, however, is certain: Charles sighs for this girl like a mother for her child; and were the Nottinghams his most bitter enemies (which they are not), he would think nothing too great to requite the service they have rendered him in saving her life, and would repay it, even at my sacrifice, with Bristol's pardon. Therefore the time draws nearer when the will and the power must both be given into *one* hand, for Father James looks like the faded tapestry in an ancestral hall, and he even forgets all about Baby's union with France, and thinks the Infanta is expected.

"Hasten, then, to bring her here. I have more to consider than this maiden; and yet she must remain in my custody until those prudent French lords have brought me their princess, and the action is finished which shall overthrow the haughty Bristol. Then shall France, who now hopes to triumph over my influence, learn that Buckingham holds, in the person of an acknowledged niece, power to neutralize the charms of their princess; whilst the proud Duchess of Nottingham, who once despised me, shall learn to lament that she had not known Buckingham's niece, that thereby she might have saved her father.

"If you behave modestly and prudently, your merit will be rewarded by the maiden's father. But be quick, and let me no longer hear that you dare not take her away by force. If she does not follow you willingly, you must take her by force; for she must disappear before any presentiment of her value becomes public. Remember that I do not set my foot out of England until I have her safe. You will find, in Berry-street, everything ready for her reception, and fitting to the rank which she will receive when she enters my house. Bring me forthwith the news of your success; and then have the honour of accompanying me to France, where I go to receive the hand of the Princess Henrietta, and to see the loveliest of women.

“ Why were you not here to help me laugh, when Thomson’s practised pen composed the letter to my shy little niece? I swear to you, that I, who daily see the prince’s writing, could not have distinguished any difference. She also knows the signet ring; for Charles talks the whole day of the admiration which he and that stiff fool, the Duke of Nottingham, had for the thing.

“ Now all will be right for me; for I perceive that this embodiment of the saints has placed me, as, a near blood relation, in a sort of sanctuary, and that she regards my name with proper reverence. I have written too much—more than you deserve. I fear it is rather tedious, but sometimes I think that you will fail me. Your debts are paid, and the steward at Berry-street has some money for you.

“ BUCKINGHAM.

“ N.B. Here is a copy of the uncle’s letter, that you may know what it contains.”

It ran as follows:—

“ Delay no longer to follow the only one who can undertake the dangerous task of leading thee to me! A terrible fate makes the noblest of men my bitterest enemy: you cannot trust yourself to them without bringing me into the greatest misery. Believe not that I am blind to the follies of him in whom you must confide, but there is no choice. He is devoted to me: I have proof of it. His soul is courageous and true. Follow him without delay. In your arms I can weep away the grief that devours me. I attach no signature: you know my hand and seal.”

Truly Membroke was little edified by the contents of this letter; but even his thoughtlessness at once saw the journey to France in the background, and in the next moment the certainty of having this proud woman in his power. Notwithstanding Buckingham’s threats, he resolved to manage things in his own way, and thought only of winning her for himself; for with his want of all respect towards women, he doubted not that a flight must lead to a thousand circumstances which he could turn to his own advantage.

For the rest of the day, Lady Mary remained with Arabella in her room. Ormond and Membroke were therefore both compelled

to restrain their impatience till the following day. When she appeared at breakfast, next morning, she betrayed the most evident signs of grief. Her face was pale, and her eyes stared so coldly around, and with an expression so inconsolable, that no one could behold her without the greatest sympathy. She looked from one to another, and then drew her seat to the young ladies, who lavished upon her marks of the purest tenderness.

Ormond remained at some distance from her, in the agitated mood which a moment of such great importance is likely to produce; but Membroke, enjoying his proud security, did not court her favour, the attainment of which was so doubtful. He announced to the old lady that he must depart for London, his majesty having had the goodness to include him in the embassy that was setting out for France, headed by the Duke of Buckingham, relative to the approaching marriage solemnities. This news was heard with as much sorrow as politeness required, and the earl turned his attention exclusively to Lady Danville.

Richmond alone approached the Lady Mary, his voice trembling as he addressed her; and when Mary, affected by the tremulous tones, raised her heavy eyes, they met such an overflow of feeling in his countenance, that in a moment the warm life returned to her heart, and her features resumed the magic expression so peculiar to them. Richmond could not mistake the cause of this change, and he gave himself up to the seducing pleasure of animating the mind of this lovely being. They had both nearly forgotten the world around them, when Richmond perceived, too late, the eyes of his mother fixed upon them in strict examination. He no longer heard what Mary said; but once more he looked upon her as if he would carry away her features in his heart, and then left her, with the cold politeness which he had formerly thought fitting to her circumstances.

Mary sank afresh into the apathy from which she had been for a moment aroused; and upon Lord Membroke approaching her, and requesting a conference, she bowed her head assentingly, with an expression of resignation, as if no power on earth could turn the threatening sword from her head.

"Speak quickly whatever I have to hear from you, my lord," said she, on seeing him approach her in the apartment where he had requested an audience. She had summoned all her strength and presence of mind, in order not to suffer herself to be surprised or led away, and she still hoped that he would not be able sufficiently to prove the power he had over her. Membroke found it easy to play the modest man, for in the next moment he might proclaim his triumph. Whilst, therefore, he respectfully offered her a seat, he remained at a proper distance, standing before her.

"My lady," said he, "my words shall not weary you long. I am only the bearer of a letter, which will probably speak more eloquently to you; and I remain here simply to receive your commands, after you have learnt its contents."

Saying this, he opened a portfolio under the sharply scrutinizing gaze of the lady, and took out the fatal letter. Deadly paleness changed to a vivid flush in Mary's countenance, as he respectfully gave her the paper. But when she saw the ever-dear traces of her uncle's handwriting, and recognised his seal, her feelings gave way, and she sank back in the chair, weeping. She would have despised herself could she now have doubted; and before she knew the contents, she had resolved to suppress all timidity, and follow the orders given her. With childish reverence she read the loving words, which expressed so much grief, affection, and trust; then pressing them to her heart, she raised her swimming eyes to heaven, and arose, fully determined, from her seat.

"I am now convinced that my uncle himself calls me; that he desires silence towards my benefactors; and that there remains no other means of fulfilling the commands of my only surviving relation, than by following you—and secretly."

She said these words with a reluctance she could not suppress, though resolved no more to affront her uncle's confidant.

"I was certain you would decide thus correctly," answered Membroke, "and have prepared all for the journey. I will, if you please, set off publicly to-morrow morning, and returning in the evening, with a fleet horse and proper followers, wait for you at the northern entrance of the park. You must go there as soon as all

is quiet; for we must make considerable way during this first night, in order to conceal ourselves from certain pursuit."

He had hastened to say all that was necessary, expecting her to be alarmed in the first moments of surprise. She stood speechless before him, and he might have said much more without being interrupted; for while he traced his plan, she shuddered at the frightful situation in which she placed herself by this decision. Her child-like love, her duty, all that a minute before had raised her above every consideration, now disappeared, as she thought of the familiarity and power of this man over her, and of the shameful suspicion she should leave behind in the circle of her protectors. The dear images of these, in all their noble virtue, passed as a warning before her. Ah! how difficult it was to renounce their respect! How it aggravated a separation, which, even without this, threatened to break her heart! She weighed the possibility of being able to justify herself. She would send them a letter, which should confirm her innocence. But her courage sank at the thought; for she felt that the true reason only could justify her, while her flight with this man was an act which must weaken the general assurance of her innocence. Thus, perfect resignation alone remained; and her pure heart reposed, full of trust, in Him who knew her innocence, and in whose hand it lay to save her from suspicion. She thought with deep sorrow of Richmond's words—that the endurance of undeserved suspicion, in the consciousness of a nobler intention, was to be regarded, in particular cases, as an appointed task; and that the dignity of this inward consciousness strengthened itself. This was now her task, and she dared not say to him that she was about to undertake it. She felt all the bitterness of her grief; but hence arose strength, leading her to regard her situation courageously in all its threatening aspect, and arming her unconsciously against it. She thought that the idea of her suffering relation was the most painful part of the picture; and she resolved to be all to him, even at so high a price.

"Let it be as you propose," said she to Lord Membroke, who, without speaking, had tried to read the quick changes of her features. "I also beg you to pardon my conduct. You must excuse

my faults, of which you were the cause, by the manner in which you apprised me of your mission. I am now inclined to trust you. Be careful, by your behaviour, to make it possible for me to do so, and to make it my sole wish that I had never known you in any other light but as the confidant of my uncle."

Membroke kneeled to hide his face of mockery, and kissed the hem of her dress, while declaring that a crowned king could not be more holy to him. A suppressed cry from Mary caused him to start up. Speechless with affright, she pointed to a female figure, not unlike the Marchioness of Danville, disappearing into the inner room, while at the end of the hall appeared Lord Ormond, hanging on Richmond's arm.

"Rise!" cried she, impatiently, "and disgrace me not by your conduct, before the time."

Membroke complied with this petition slowly enough to make it certain that both the lords had seen him at her feet, and bidding her adieu confidentially, he left her.

The unhappy Mary was not aware of this; for at the sight of the two noblemen, and Membroke's posture, she had nearly fainted, overpowered by the frightful conviction that her scrutiny had already begun. She felt her strength again fail, and again she asked her conscience if it were necessary so cruelly to commit herself. Yes, even the doubt occurred to her as to the request of her uncle. She felt that misery and trouble must have weakened this honourable man's superiority, since he did not scruple to place her in so doubtful a position. "But," said her gentle heart, "even then must I go to him: my love must console this noble being." She was resolute; and a loud deep sigh ended this frightful struggle.

"Will Lady Mary allow no one to share the grief with which she seems oppressed?" asked a gentle but agitated voice; and Mary, who had not seen any one approach, beheld Lord Ormond's sympathizing face. She slowly shook her head, and her lips remained closed.

"O, dear Mary!" cried he, quickly, "why has only one the right to enjoy your confidence, and that one so unworthy, whilst

you are surrounded by the truest and most honourable friends, who would think no effort too much to restore your peace? Oh, my lady, have compassion upon your friends—upon yourself! The burden which you bear is too heavy for you alone: choose one of us, therefore, that he may be happy enough to bear it with you.”

“That remains in the hand of God,” sighed Mary, raising her eyes in faith to heaven. Then, overpowered by the fervent manner of this noble man, she turned towards him, and holding out her hand, said—“whatever an inexorable fate may desire of me, be sure, my lord, that I will remember this hour of your true sympathy; and, however impossible it is for me to accept your offer, be sure that I feel its value deeply, and so much the more, as I respect him who so generously makes it.”

“Oh,” cried Ormond, urgently, “if you respect me, if you trust me, nothing prevents your recognising me as your protector. Oh, say, what binds you to this unprincipled man? Why cannot you withdraw yourself from his influence? Believe me, no doubt of your angel-like purity darkens my reverence for you. I am certain that deceptions are spread around you, and that it is a mistaken virtue which makes you dependent on this man. Speak! say only one word, that you can separate yourself from him, and I will oblige him never again to approach you.”

“Oh, no, no!” cried Mary. “Stay your zeal. Leave him in peace—follow him not. I dare not induce it—dare not permit it!”

Ormond turned away in speechless grief; but the knowledge that she was unhappy, and the frightful thought that she was in the power of a man of whom he knew nothing but what was disadvantageous, conquered every other consideration. Whatever he might have begun to suffer, through her apparent sympathy for this man, he could not leave her, and with renewed feeling he turned towards her, saying,

“Dear Lady Mary, regard me as your best friend, and in this character my words deserve your attention. My heart is heavily grieved at the state in which I see you. I could leave you, were you happy; but you are not so. This unhappy man has not been able to bring you peace and content with this confidence. Therefore

your friends cannot remain quiet ; and, believe me, whoever knows you, dear Lady Mary, must feel an interest in you."

He paused, in hope of an answer ; but her lovely face only became more pale : her lips opened, but, unable to speak, anxious sighs only escaped. Then arose to the unhappy man the heaviest supposition, but which he could not suppress.

" I cannot leave you," said he, making a motion with his hand to that effect : " I cannot leave you. You have given me the right of a friend ; and be not angry, if my care for you makes me appear too urgent. Let me confess the greatest anxiety of my heart, and, in this case also, reckon on my boundless devotion in any assistance that may be necessary. I ask you, has the pleasing appearance of this man, has his lively conversation, made an impression on your young and inexperienced heart ? Do you love him ?"

As if an electric shock had struck her, Lady Mary arose, seeming to burst at once the apathetic bonds in which she lay enchained, and awakened to full energy. Her cheeks burning, her eyes flashing, and her hands pressed to her heart, she cried from the bottom of her soul, " God be gracious to me, my lord ! to what does your imagination lead you ? How could you think this ? No, no ! be sure that I love him not, and never can love him ! No, in justice to myself, I declare this to be impossible !"

She bowed herself before him with such innocent warmth, that he joyfully believed her ; and had she seen the expression of his countenance, she must have read the delight which the belief gave him. His moment was now come.

" I think," said he, trembling, " or forgive me if I vex you—be not angry—but let me proceed more earnestly to warn you, if no feeling binds you to him."

" Noble friend, if you believe me," said Mary, softly and gravely, " prove it by submitting to trust me without reasons. I hope to be justified before God, but it is denied me to be so before men. I must this time follow my conscience. I stand—alone," added she, full of wo, " and separated from my natural helper."

" No," cried Ormond, interrupting her, " you are not alone : it depends on you only to bind him, whom you have called your friend,

for ever to you by the holiest bonds. Yes, dear Lady Mary, I can no longer be silent. I love you. Say that you will be mine, and make me the happiest of men. Oh, trust me! I will honour, protect, and love you; and the whole burden of your undeserved fate, however great it may be, I will take upon me: your angel heart shall breathe freely, and you will feel the inexpressible delight of making me happy."

Mary had regarded him with an expression more of fear than joy. She pressed her hand to her forehead, as if she would arouse her consciousness; whilst Ormond hung with expectation on her countenance, which only too clearly evinced her distress.

"You—you love me!" stammered she at last, almost devoid of utterance, and her beautiful eyes filled with tears, which fell upon Ormond's hands; while he, no longer master of himself, fell at her feet. "Oh, Lord Ormond! why do you love me?" added she, in a tone of deep grief. "Oh, why me? Yet no—it cannot be: it is only your generous zeal that leads you to this belief. No, no, you do not love me, but would save me from the inconsolable loneliness in which I stand. You would save me—you would sacrifice yourself, in order to free me from the influence of that man, whom you describe to me as so corrupting. I have guessed and acknowledge the generosity of your heart. Yet I cannot accept the sacrifice from you. "Oh, rise!" said she, urgently, for Ormond bowed his head, and did not change his posture.

"What I propose, is no sacrifice on my part—it is I who require a sacrifice from you," said Ormond, struggling to obtain composure: "I, the isolated one, sought the society of an angel—the aged man has the feelings of youth, and expects to excite those feelings in others. I am justly punished: my suffering is the punishment for my folly. You do not love me—I see it clearly. Although you do not utter the word, I understand you, and I will endeavour to survive it."

"For God's sake, do not speak thus!" cried Mary, seized with almost deadly anguish; and she advanced hastily towards him, as he, pale and trembling, strove to support himself against a pillar. Tears of bitter and painful sympathy streamed over her cheeks.

Bereft of all timidity, she saw only a noble sufferer, and a sufferer through her. She seized his hand, and pressed it between her own; she sought to meet his eye, in order to ease him by the tenderest sympathy; and had Ormond, in this painful moment, known how to prize the warmest feeling of friendship, he must have been consoled by the expression of her beautiful features.

He wrestled with his disappointed hope, and endeavouring to conquer his agitation, he took the hand which she extended towards him.

"Angel!" said he, deeply affected by her innocent and tender care, "you cannot do harm, although you have, in one instant, changed the most blooming paradise of the future into the dreary wastes of the desert. I will learn to live, and to endure patiently. Forget what I have said to you; but forget not that I ever remain your truest friend. Promise me, as a slight recompense for what I have lost, that I may retain the privileges and rights of friendship."

She gently placed her hand in the one which he offered her. "My noble and generous friend," said she with fervour, "perhaps the moment will come when you will be reminded of this right, not by my lips, but by the remembrance of me."

She was silent, for she felt the burden of her future fate. Ormond stood still, and courageously overcoming his grief, he turned his thoughts exclusively to her mysterious situation.

"Must I understand your words as implying your separation from us? What has been done to frighten you from this place? Oh! believe me you are loved by all: each member of this family esteems himself happy in being able to give you honourable protection until time shall have explained your circumstances. Why will you not continue to receive this protection, which is productive of so much pleasure to those by whom it is afforded?"

Oppressed in spirit, and overcome by the images which arose in her fancy, Mary could not reply. Ormond remained standing before her, and attentively regarding her, whilst his mind, violently agitated, hurried from one conclusion to another. Suddenly the bands seemed torn from his eyes.

"She loves!" cried a voice within him, and involuntarily he exclaimed, "You love, Mary! I now know all—you love!"

Mary trembled, laid her hand upon her heart, and looked up to Lord Ormond with an inquiring glance.

"You love, dear lady," he continued, in a tone of sympathy, for she seemed to wait for some sound from his lips; and, as if struck by a sudden perception, he added, with the force of conviction, "you love Richmond!"

Her eyes kindled at these words, and pressing her hand on her heart, she sank down fainting, without a sound. Ormond repressed his own agitation at this sight, and opening the casement, he placed her gently on the window-seat. She was colourless, and resembled more a marble statue than a living being. Yet a smile played round her mouth, and the autumnal sun illuminated with pale golden streaks this saintly image.

It was soon evident to Lord Ormond that she was reviving: her breast heaved as gently as if she were sleeping, her smile became sweeter, and a few drops, forcing their way from beneath her eyelids, fell like pearls upon her bosom. But she did not open her eyes, and Ormond remained watching her in mute expectation. His words had unveiled the secret of her heart, and this seemed to give him so powerful a right over her, that her consciousness was lost. It was scarcely a swoon by which she had been overcome: dreams and realities were strangely mingled in her mind. She was conscious that she lay on the window-seat, within reach of the sun's rays; she knew that Ormond stood by her side, protecting her; and yet, without any transition of ideas which could estrange her from the reality, it seemed if the bay-window divided itself before her, and left her an uninterrupted view of the beautiful landscape. She appeared to be sitting upon a height, from which she overlooked a beautiful country, rich with handsome cities, powerful castles, and lofty towers and cathedrals. She saw distinctly many active people, engaged in their different pursuits, and all belonging to former times. It appeared to be a festival day throughout the land, for the crowd poured on in one direction, and from a distance came sounds of music, mingled with the voices of men, the clang of arms,

and cries of joy. An enamelled green covered the hill upon which she lay, and it appeared as if its base did not touch the ground. She felt a soothing pleasure, a heavenly deliverance from all earthly care. Near the edge of the hill was an oak wood, upon which the sun shone, and the ground glistened with the fresh green of the moss, and the shadows of the oak leaves danced like flowers upon it. Then she heard a sacred chorus of priests: they sang an *Agnus Dei*, and soon they appeared on the wide road, walking two and two, with the saints, and with sweet boys, who bore silver vases, from which curled the blue smoke of the incense. These were followed by knights in golden armour, and with waving plumes. Others next bore upon their shoulders a silver coffin, surmounted by a golden crown, and boys, clad in dark silk and gold, held the corners of the royal purple pall. Many others followed, in mourning dresses; and then the wide road was empty, and only the sun played with the leaves upon the fresh ground. Lively strains now resounded. The wood was obscured, yet the new tones were those of trumpets, which announced a marriage feast; and soon a gorgeous train appeared, arrayed with all the richness and magnificence of regal pomp. The golden stuffs in which the noble dames and stately cavaliers were clad, the precious stones, and the many-coloured feathers, sparkled brightly in the sun. The prancing steps of the splendidly adorned steeds appeared more inspired by the trumpets, than guided by the light pressure of the golden bridles. Beauty heightened magnificence, and happiness and pleasure joined in sweet harmony. At last the chief attraction of the train approached. Two charming young boys led a milk-white palfrey, which bore the young beauty, who, in the adornments of a queen, appeared crowned with leaves, moss, and flowers, like a wood-nymph. She had woven a web of delicate threads around a handsome, regal-looking man, who, fervently devoted to her, was chained by her lovely eyes. The train approached, and seemed to mount the hill. The lovely woman nodded to Mary, and raising her white hand, she placed her delicate fingers in the golden circlet of a crown, which she extended towards her. The man by her side raised his eyes, and looked tenderly upon her.

"My uncle!" she exclaimed. The whole picture—the sweet dream—had disappeared. She stood up suddenly before Lord Ormond, who was imploring her to awake. She looked at him with the sweetest smile; her eyes sparkled, as if illuminated by some light within, and soft blushes covered her face.

"Yes," said she, as if Lord Ormond had only just spoken the important words—"Yes, you have said it; I know it now—I love him!"

She pressed her hands upon her breast, as if she would secure the new-born conviction. She seemed to have forgotten entirely what Lord Ormond had said to her of himself, and was endeavouring to make him the confidant of her now intelligible feeling. Ormond sank down kneeling before her, his face hid in her hands, which she had allowed him to take, and remained mute with emotion.

A loud convulsive sob, close to her, awoke her out of her inspired reverie. Ormond jumped up, and Mary looked round. Olonia Dorset stood opposite to her, weeping bitterly, and her pale face bearing an expression of deep despair. As soon as she saw that she was observed, she flew to Mary, and embracing her, said,

"Thou lovest him! Oh! thou happy one! And thee—how he loves thee! Oh, take him—take him! Olonia can die for you both! Yes, you belong to one another: so let it be. How could he love me, when thou wert present? Oh, Mary, I could sometimes even hate thee, because thou hast destroyed my happiness. Yet I—I cannot hate thee—I can only love thee the more; for thou appearest to me yet more worthy of my affection, since he has awarded thee the meed of his love!"

"Oh, God!" exclaimed Ormond, quite distracted on perceiving the grief of this affectionate creature, who had now declared what he had long suspected—that she loved Richmond in secret, and had been unable to restrain her feelings on learning that Mary was also attached to him. His heart was at this moment divided between his niece and the dear object of his love. Mary pressed Olonia to her heart, without speaking.

"She will faint," said she gently, and with Ormond's assistance she placed her on a chair.

"Alas!" said Ormond, sighing, "must thou, too, feel the pangs of unrequited love! How often have I prayed that she might be spared this trial. And yet I guessed her love—yes, I wished it, before I could suppose it, that my noble Richmond should win this high prize."

"You are mistaken," said Mary, lightly: "Lord Richmond does not love me, and that feeling which taught me the name of love, has no response in his bosom. Olonia loves not Richmond: she loves you, dear Ormond—you! whilst you have deceived yourself, and, till this moment, have overlooked it. Without naming you, she long since betrayed her secret to me, and I hope that you share her feeling."

Ormond's surprise deprived him of the power of reply. Her simple and decided words left no room for misinterpretation, and the conviction of the truth, supported by a thousand proofs, forced itself upon him. But only a short time was allowed him for these thoughts. Olonia recovered, and opening her eyes, she looked tenderly at the two individuals standing before her. Then taking Ormond's hand, and placing it in that of Mary, she said gently,

"You two are then one: and thou, best and dearest of mankind—thou wilt be happy!"

She endeavoured to raise herself, but was obliged to be supported by her two friends.

"Olonia," said Mary calmly, "thou hast joined two hands which were already united in friendship, but love will not fellow. Now," added she, turning to Ormond, "leave our dear Olonia to my care. I will take her away in safety."

Ormond pressed the hands of both to his heart, and hastened away in increased anguish.

CHAPTER XIX.

The following day was the last that Lady Mary was to spend under the protection of this honourable family, and she had the heavy task of concealing her agitated feelings. If anything could counterbalance her anxiety, it was the explanation which Ormond's words had given of her feelings; and in spite of outward circumstances, she found time fully to understand herself. She was surprised at having been able to bear this so long incomprehensible secret; and she blamed herself for having lost, in confusion and disquiet, that love and joy which now appeared the treasure of her soul, ennobling her, and appearing to give her a more exalted being. Her clear understanding at once satisfied her that these feelings must not be cherished, and that she would only be worthy of herself, and might indulge them with propriety, when she exercised a perfect resignation.

Thus she sanctified her thoughts, and when she looked forward to her future life she became more calm. Her mind no longer pondered on the sacrifice required by the step she was about to take, but merely on the doubt whether that step were the right one. The only thing that could overcome her irresolution was the letter; but even the dearly-loved writing could not assist her in conquering her reluctance to travel with Lord Membroke; and after many vain efforts, she allowed herself to yield to that feeling.

Strangely did she meet Richmond's look when she first saw him again at table, and she would have borne his glance with difficulty, had not her perfect resignation made him appear simply as the beautiful ideal of her love. An unspeakable peace penetrated her heart, and she desisted the melancholy expression of his eye, which gave her the sad conviction, that he regarded her relation with Lord Membroke with compassion. A sigh betokened the painfulness of the sacrifice which was laid upon her; but she felt some consolation in the thought that as her feelings had never found an echo in his

heart, the grief that she now felt was unknown to him. "Soon," thought she, "will the event take place, which will remove me for ever from your pure presence. My name will then be coupled with those of the abandoned ones, and you will blush to acknowledge that I was ever sheltered under your roof."

It was almost a blessing that Olonia's situation demanded her care. Mary possessed the quality, peculiar to women, of repressing her own feelings, and yielding herself up to the interest of others. Thus quickly perceiving Olonia's condition, she endeavoured to rouse her to exertion and strength. A long conversation, in which she carefully avoided any reference to her own future, showed Olonia that she certainly would never marry Lord Ormond, and also awakened in her that maiden feeling which leads to self-control. Mary hoped therefore to release Olonia from her impassioned condition, and to gain time for Ormond, from which she anticipated happiness for her.

So entirely devoted to the interests of others, our young heroine had but little attention to bestow on her own fate; but when she did cast a glance into the darkness which veiled it, the image of her uncle appeared as a ray of light. All the powers of her noble mind were turned to this, giving her that quiet gravity which moderates the first glow of happiness, and ripens the virtues of the soul. This evinced itself in her exterior, and her manner bore that gentle dignity which betokens satisfaction with life.

Membroke could not overlook this, and was displeased at it; for he would have preferred to see her weak and discomposed. Her dignity gave him less power over her, and he inwardly cursed her for continually offering him fresh difficulties.

When the company arose from table, the younger persons betook themselves to their amusements, but Mary could take no part in them. Her heart longed, with childlike fervour, for the company of the duchess: she wished to pass her last hours in her presence, and thus strengthen herself for the future.

With a shudder she saw Membroke take leave of all at the table. When he approached her, he gave her a confidential look, and whispered—"I shall return at nine o'clock." Mary, deeply

offended, forgot the relation in which she stood to him, and answered him with a look of contempt. But all saw that her face was flushed, and Richmond turned away and left the circle.

When the duchess had departed, Mary remained behind, sunk in the most sorrowful feelings at the thought of having seen them all for the last time. She took leave in spirit of each: none appeared too insignificant to be remembered: even the pages and servants were not forgotten. Lucy hung upon her neck, and begged her to take an early walk with her on the following morning; and she was immediately surrounded by all the young ladies, requesting her to join the hunt which Richmond had fixed for the morrow: but she could not deceive him, and therefore she declined.

Then she escaped quickly from all; but finding that she could not bear to be alone, she resolved to put into execution her intention of visiting the duchess, in whose presence she felt herself safe from any fresh agitation. Having been announced by the page, she entered the gothic room. In the deep recess of one of the windows she found the duchess, and, to her surprise, she beheld Lord Richmond seated on a stool at his mother's feet.

"Welcome, Lady Mary," said the duchess, whilst Richmond sprang up quickly. "You are very kind to wish to spend the afternoon with me, when all the rest have gone off in search of other enjoyments."

She extended her hand to Mary, who, with a heavy heart, pressed it to her lips.

"And yet, my lady," said Mary, "I fear that you have been too kind in receiving me. You have pleasant society—perhaps business," added she, looking at Richmond, who, holding numerous papers in his hand, stood speechless, bowing to her.

"I should, in that case, have honestly said so," replied the duchess. "He to whom I say, welcome, may be sure of it. Sit down," added she, drawing a stool for Lady Mary near her own chair. "And you, Lord Richmond, take your former place, and read me the conclusion of your letter. My dear Lady Mary will, meanwhile, amuse herself with that song."

Richmond prepared to obey his mother's command; and when

after various delays, he found the sentence which Mary's arrival had interrupted, he read, with a voice which endeavoured to gain firmness,

"Under these circumstances, I cannot exactly decide when it will be my happiness to embrace you, my dear duchess. I nowise wish that you should come to London; for, in the prospect which opens itself to us, it will perhaps be granted to me to come to Godway Castle. That I long for this, and will use all in my power to hasten it, you will be certain of; but my duchess will not wish that any thing should be improperly hastened in an affair on which her father's honour depends."

"That be before God!" said the duchess, reverentially folding the Earl of Bristol's letter, which Richmond gave her. "Yet am I of opinion that it is incumbent on me to think carefully of these proofs. Not only as a daughter do I feel myself anxious for the honour of my father, but as an Englishwoman. For say, to what will it come with a country in which men, who may be called the pillars of the state, and who for two generations have enjoyed the honours and respect of foreign nations, must defend themselves, as if they were unknown, from the attacks of abandoned upstarts, who have no deeds to speak for them. England will be confounded by the intelligence that Bristol stands before the judgment-seat of parliament; and fresh we will attach to the name of Buckingham, who spreads such boundless misery, and to whom posterity will attribute all the unhappiness and shame of this period."

Lady Mary shuddered. The strong, bitter words of the irritated woman betokened the catastrophe in which her own fate was so mysteriously and dangerously interwoven. They mentioned the name of Buckingham in connexion with the same circumstances that had been referred to by Membroke, and thus confirmed the truth of his report.

"I have to tell you one thing more of Lord Archibald's suppositions, dear mother," said Richmond. "His activity has not rested a moment. The great hindrances which the watchfulness of Buckingham laid in the way, are, by the help of a powerful secret enemy, overcome; and they have found the trace of Lord Saville, who,

after the recal of your father, purloined the important documents which, signed by Olivarez, confirmed the determined and honourable conduct of the earl. It is certainly a sorrowful time, when Lord Bristol requires a document to free himself from the shameful suspicion of having maliciously, and from personal reasons, involved his country in so dangerous a war; but since it is so, we will rejoice that the innocent never want friends, and Lord Bristol can count among his the highest and best names of the land."

"You speak truly, my son; but, I repeat it, I fully regret that England is in the way to become the mockery of foreign nations."

"Lord Archibald," continued Richmond, "appears, moreover, to expect the death of the king. His fever has returned, and the war with Spain is a fearful prospect, under which the unhappy old man, whose whole puerile politics, during his life, bound him with that country, threatens to sink. Buckingham's conclusion of the marriage with the French princess will take place, against the will of the king and the prince. This bold man has taught the king to tremble; and the assent of the prince was given during a violent fever, by which he was attacked after his return from Spain, and respecting the cause of which, though Buckingham exclusively attended him, very strange rumours are abroad. Thus much is certain, that the prince, unflinchingly gracious to all that concerns our family, has endeavoured by all means to prevent this suit; but the king, hardened by Buckingham, and beside himself at seeing a war at the end of his life, which he is always anxious to avoid, looks to the earl as the sole cause."

"Well," said the duchess, "God preserve his life until he sees his best and truest friend justified. I could not bear this royal head to be called to its eternal account, before he has rendered the earthly justice which is so well deserved."

A deep sigh arose from the bosom of the unhappy Lady Mary. The just wish of this noble woman, her benefactress and Richmond's mother—this holy wish, for the fulfilment of which she would have raised her hands to heaven—bore the death judgment over her only dear relation—that uncle on whom, notwithstanding his apparent guilt, she could not think without the deepest and most tender agitation.

She had scarcely a doubt that it was to the concealed Lord Saville that she must yield herself; that Lord Membroke had told her the truth; and that she was about to fly to one who had been the persecutor of her protectors. Her hard fate stood as a giant before her, ready to tear asunder all the tender ties which bound her to this beloved family. The duchess mistook her appearance of sympathy, and pressing her hand gently, said,

"God protect you from all such cares, my dear child. Your too tender heart would be broken by such sorrows."

"The fates of men are different," said Richmond, deeply moved: "no two are alike; but sorrow finds its way to each breast, and its inward reception alone makes the difference. But the slightest griefs are those which arise from our own disappointed happiness. He has lasting courage who bears up when he sees the noblest and dearest that earth holds for him, suffer and fall under the control of a wicked power, without the right being given to him to protect or defend."

"We will herewith end, and not regard as necessary an expedient so violent as that which your youthful zeal seems to forebode," said the duchess in a heavy tone, and appearing not to observe how Richmond's eyes were fixed upon the pale, lovely face of Lady Mary.

The latter saw not these eyes, for hers were cast upon the ground in melancholy reflection; but his voice went to her heart, and a cutting grief rushed through it.

"God grant it," said Richmond, sighing deeply; "and you may forgive my gloomy words. But I think," added he, forcing a smile, "the fog of the last few days has caused them. I am not myself. I feel it; and the expectation of to-morrow lies heavily upon me."

Mary's head here sank on the arm of the chair on which the duchess sat; yet the latter did not perceive the falling tears which she strove to hide; for, like a mother, she gazed into Richmond's face, and placing her hand anxiously on his forehead, said,

"In truth you are ill. I have forgotten that we have remained here too long. We will return to Godway Castle. Its elevated and healthy situation will better restore you; and, besides, it is so

much nearer to London, and it is easier there to collect a circle of friends, which will afford you diversion and recreation."

"Oh, be not uneasy on my account, dear mother," said Richmond: "it is not the air which thus oppresses my heart. No other air can soothe this pain. Believe and trust me, I must be raised out of myself, and it shall be so. Yet I will not oppose your plan of returning to Godway Castle. We shall there be nearer London, and there will our fate be decided."

"Well, then, send orders for our reception there," said the duchess, still filled with anxiety.

All rose, and Richmond was about to depart. Mary felt that the moment of her separation from him was arrived. She could scarcely stand, and supported herself by the chair of the duchess, who, proceeding to a table, prepared some papers for her son.

Richmond, looking at Mary, perceived her agitation, and approached her.

"And will Lady Mary allow her present friends the right of taking her with them? Shall I order her rooms to be prepared for her?"

Mary tried in vain to answer. After some fruitless attempts to open her trembling lips, she shook her head.

"You will not, then, accompany us?" added he, in agitation: "you disdain the hearts that are so fervently devoted to you, and which you have taught by your presence to forget that it is possible to live without you? There is, then, no one among us who can boast of possessing the happiness of being necessary to you. You are so good, so generous—but not loving."

He paused. His words had almost deprived Mary of consciousness. But her lips were closed with a seal, and the anguish of this silence alone supported her. At last she pressed her hand on her heart, and raised her eyes, bearing in her glance the whole expression of her feelings.

"I do not understand this," said the duchess, turning round: "will you not return to Godway Castle, Lady Mary?"

"My will is not free," answered she, with an expression of resignation.

"How is this?" demanded the duchess. "What is the matter with you? When have we ever commanded or laid any restraint upon you? Decide, according to your own pleasure, whether you will proceed with us, or follow later with my mother-in-law."

"I feel your goodness, and have only to thank you with my whole soul for the increasing generosity you have ever displayed towards me. Be assured that I would rather be where you are, and that it would be my sweetest feeling to serve you, so as not to be deprived of your presence."

The duchess felt flattered by the expression of so much affection in her son's presence, and drawing Mary towards her with more than usual kindness, she kissed her forehead.

"You are a dear affectionate child," said she. "I value your company very much, and wish that you would go with us."

Mary's heart fell. Sinking down, and seizing the hands of the duchess, she cried imploringly, "Oh, in this happy hour, give me your blessing, that it may rest irrevocably on my head. Whatever dark fate may hang over me, never recal it, for I hope that, like a good angel, it may ever remain at my side."

Her tears flowed fast, and her manner was so irresistibly urgent, that the duchess laid her hands on her head without hesitation. "God bless thee, dear child," said she, with apparent surprise. "But rise, and be not so vehement. Without any visible reason, you are as solemn as if at the judgment-day. We should hold strong discipline over our feelings, or we shall be very easily surprised by light causes."

Mary arose and dried her eyes: she felt the repose of death. With this last agitation her mind appeared to have finished its struggle, and, to him who loved her, she seemed as a dying one. She could perceive no shadow of a hope that she should ever again be united to her beloved Richmond: her separation seemed as complete and irrevocable as if produced by death. But this recollection of her sorrowful fate renewed her courage for an instant: she looked up at Richmond as he went away, following him with her eyes until he had disappeared through the door.

"I have beheld him for the last time," said she to her deadened heart. She remained till the old duchess appeared to conduct her daughter to the evening company. Both were struck with Lady Mary's paleness, and advised her to retire to her room. Gently kissing the hands of both for the last time, she went slowly past the saloon, from which resounded a merriment in which she should never again participate.

CHAPTER XX.

When Mary returned to her room, after leaving the duchess, she dismissed her faithful attendant Errol, and remained alone to prepare herself for the important undertaking. She had a few preparations to make, all of them tending to render her as independent of Membroke as possible. Having secured her jewels, and a considerable sum of money which she had in her possession, she collected together a few articles of dress, which she packed together in to a small bundle. She then attired herself in a thick travelling dress, and waited until the appointed hour. When she heard the castle clock strike nine, she knelt down by her little desk, where she should never kneel again. Her face was pale, the expression of her features was grave and earnest, and she felt that freedom of soul which arises from a resolution to follow the path of duty, even though that path be beset with many dangers. Now that her separation from Richmond was past, it seemed to her that nothing else could affect her.

She prayed to God for protection :—"Guard my soul, and take it under thy care. Give me strength to fulfil the duty which lies upon me. Lord ! thy will be done."

After this short prayer she arose, wrapped herself in a large cloak, and hastened out of the room. She knew that the company had not yet retired, but she was resolved to venture with fearless indifference. In order to avoid the saloon, she passed through the

gallery, in which, the morning before, her future life had been decided. She thought once more of Ormond, and when she reached the spot where she had received the outpourings of his noble heart, she paused for a moment, as if ashamed. She heard voices approaching, and steps in the park outside. Her situation was precarious; for the party carried torches, and the large bay-window in which she stood was so distinctly visible in the clear moonlight, that her dark figure must be perceived even by the most hasty eye. She could not doubt of their looking towards that window, for amongst the voices she distinguished that of Lord Ormond, who would be attracted to the spot by the same recollections as herself.

She had, however, no alternative, but to trust to chance. The voices came nearer, and she stood, closely enveloped in her cloak, in the corner of the window. The gentlemen appeared to have been arranging the next morning's hunt for they were talking of their horses. Richmond preceded the others, and as he passed the window, he said,

"No, Sir Francis, choose whatever other horse you like, but this one belongs to Lady Melville, who, I hope, will accompany us."

Ormond followed, his head sank on his bosom; the remembrance of what had passed there that morning, appeared too painful to allow any thought for external things. At length the whole party had passed, and soon only a streak of light from their torches glided along the ground.

Mary now fled as quickly as possible. Entering the shady walks of the park, she approached the place of meeting, and soon distinguished among the rustling leaves the voice of her companion. An indescribable horror seized her as Lord Membroke advanced to greet her.

"Are you ready, my lord? Hasten, then, and lead me along the thorny part of duty; and remember, although I may appear helpless, that God watches over me, and that He will one day judge you."

"Your helplessness, dear lady, exists only in your own imagination. On the contrary, this is the first step to that distinguished place to which your birth entitles you. The powerful Buckingham

and your noble uncle will come forth conquering out of all the sorrows prepared for them by this proud family. Doubt it not."

"Oh, be silent, I pray you, concerning the triumphs which are bought by the misfortunes of my benefactors. How can you, a relation of this noble family, think of their sorrows with indifference? I cannot, even at the price of seeing my dear uncle saved."

"I confess I did not expect reproach, because I am more alive to your interests than to my own," said Lord Membroke; "but I see that Lady Melville has more generosity for every other person than for me."

"This is not the moment to dispute about words," replied Lady Mary, gravely, "but I will give you my thanks, and they shall not be few, if you will guide me to my natural protector. Let us commence our journey."

At a short distance Lady Mary perceived two horses, and also two servants on horseback. She quickly mounted the one destined for her, and drawing the hood of her cloak over her face, committed the charge of her steed to Lord Membroke, who rode beside her, whilst one servant preceded them, and the other brought up the rear of the little train. Mary remained absorbed in her own thoughts, conscious only that a new life was now beginning for her, and that youth lay closed behind her.

When the morning broke, they found themselves near a lonely farm-house, where Lord Membroke had ordered a litter to be in readiness, and where he requested Lady Melville to take some refreshment. All his attempts to draw her into conversation had been unsuccessful, and her manner gave him no hope of ever being able to do so. The few answers which she felt herself constrained to make, were cool and reserved: she admitted neither familiarity nor reproach, and treated him merely as her conductor.

The damp night, the cold of the morning, and the fatiguing ride, had made her require refreshment; and it was not without pleasure that she saw the arrival of the litter, since it would not only diminish her fatigue, but secure for her greater retirement. She therefore expressed her thanks for these considerate arrangements

for her journey, and almost wished to bring herself to feel more kindly towards her guide.

Lord Membroke was delighted. Such gentle words she had never before addressed to him, and he began to indulge the hope of securing her favour. He redoubled his efforts to make her comfortable, and the miserable state of the farm-house afforded him opportunity for numerous attentions. There was, certainly, a high turf fire on the hearth, but the smoke appeared to have no other means of escape than by the dilapidated windows and doors. A number of half-clad children, with their dirty-looking mother, and some savage-looking men, shared with the travellers the only apartment which the house contained, and conscious that they had nothing suitable to offer for the refreshment of such great people, they regarded them with indifference. Membroke produced the contents of his travelling wallet, and having prepared a seat by the fire for his charge, he dried her damp cloak with care. He could not, however, allow her much time for rest, and Mary feared pursuit too much not to wish to hasten onward.

She now therefore mounted her litter, and Membroke rode at the head of the train, which, increased by the addition of two more servants, proceeded forward with redoubled speed. Mary could not obtain much rest. Her head was burning, and her heart beat with violence. The peace which she had felt in the consciousness of doing her duty, gave way to fear and anxiety: she trembled at every sound, and almost wished that unforeseen misfortunes might occur, for she could bear anything better than this evil, for which she could find no name.

Towards the middle of the day, she heard the servants, who had been riding behind, gallop past her litter to Membroke, who instantly urged the train to greater speed. She perceived by the motion that they turned on one side, and she had no longer any doubt that they were pursued. But by whom? This thought banished every other. She did not venture to ask Membroke, whom she heard galloping here and there. But in a few moments she became aware, by the horses' hoofs behind her, that they were overtaken. After some useless efforts to increase their speed, the litter stopped, and

she heard a confused tumult of voices, which had now approached the spot where they stood.

"Stop! stop!" cried a well-known voice, and immediately she heard Membroke in violent colloquy with Richmond and Ormond. He answered their reproaches with almost frightful coolness. He inquired with disdain by what right they followed him and the lady, and upon what authority they demanded her restoration, since he could not have succeeded in carrying her off had she not consented.

"Cease this calumny!" cried Richmond, almost frantic with rage: "she has not followed you willingly. You have taken her away by force, and I demand her from you in the name of the Duchess of Nottingham, whose house you have dared to insult by such a deed. Deliver the lady to us at once, and we will suffer the affront to pass unnoticed."

"Leave the choice to the lady herself," said Lord Membroke. "She shall herself decide whom she will follow: she shall say whether she goes with me willingly, or whether I have constrained her. Truly, my lord, we are unnecessarily warm: a word from her lips will explain all better, than I, by my most zealous endeavours, can do; and, believe me, I am quite ready to give her over to you, should she desire it."

Membroke's behaviour denoted a consciousness of security, which struck fear and doubt into Ormond's heart, whilst it only increased Richmond's anger.

"Stay this abuse!" cried he: "you shall no longer thus insult the purest virtue." And advancing to the litter, he opened the door.

Mary had heard every word of this controversy, and although irritated by finding the advantage which Membroke had taken of her situation, she too plainly perceived that it was not possible to save herself from these frightful suspicions. When she beheld Richmond, glowing with anger, stand before her as if waiting for her decision, her recollection deserted her, and her first impulse was to throw herself out of the litter.

"Stay, my lady," said Membroke coldly, "and answer the questions of this strict judge. Say, do you follow me with your

own will? Have you received me as the conductor of this journey? or have I used force, and seduced you?"

"Seduced!" repeated Lady Mary with horror. "No, no! he does not seduce me. Rather death than that!"

"And yet," cried Richmond, "and yet you are with him."

"You see," said Membroke, with an ironical smile, "that you gain nothing by using force with such a proud girl as this."

"Lady," said Richmond, whilst, trembling, he held by the litter, "how came you in his power? I do not ask for my own sake—for I have no right over you—but for my mother, who trusts you as her own child. Answer me, I implore you—why did you leave us—why are you in Lord Membroke's power?"

He was silent, and visibly exhausted. His broken language, and his downcast looks, evinced how deeply he was agitated. Mary felt each of his words as a fresh wound. To be compelled to renounce his respect—not to dare to mention that which would prove her justification, and which would preserve his recollection of her free from guilt—this thought had appeared to be the greatest of her miseries. But how much more it now tormented her, when it was accompanied by his agitating words, and the touching expression of his voice and mien. She asked herself if there were any escape for her? Once she sighed to be saved; but the answer which her clear mind gave her was the same. Soon her strength, which had nearly vanished, returned, and she said, with a hollow but firm voice—

"Tell your noble mother, my dear lord—tell her that I still deserve the blessing she laid upon my head, and once more I entreat her not to revoke it. More I cannot say. Delay not my journey, and leave me to Lord Membroke's protection."

"Good God!" cried Richmond, vehemently, "how fearfully you must have been deceived, since you believe yourself right. How can we leave you, since we doubt not that you are deceived. Here, my lady, here is Lord Ormond: he enjoys your confidence. Permit him, I beseech you, to examine the circumstances which produced so strange a step. Ormond, come nearer, I pray you. Speak—persuade the lady to trust you. Assuredly you are deceived

Your youth, your inexperience, your courageous virtue, and your candid mind—all have misled you."

Ormond approached, but he seemed as if paralyzed by what had occurred, and by the words he had just heard. His question died upon his lips, and he only raised his eyes to her with an expression in which reproach struggled for the mastery with grief.

"It is enough," said Mary, collecting all her courage: "I am not deceived: the necessity which forces me to this proceeding is confirmed by undeniable proofs, which I dare not reject. I must be silent, but perhaps God will one day grant me my only desired happiness—that of seeing myself justified to you. Yes, it may even be possible for me to be of use to my benefactors. Leave me now, my lords, and, if you can avoid it, judge me not."

"You will, then, leave your friends?" stammered Richmond: "You disdain our approbation? Mary, dear Mary!"

The unhappy girl covered her face with her hands: her courage was gone, her senses left her, and she heard no more.

"It appears to me, my lord," said Membroke, "that I have shown you all the forbearance that you can claim. I ask you now to retire, and leave Lady Melville to her free choice, which, as you may perceive, is not in your favour."

Richmond's eyes still rested on Mary, who lay on her knees in the litter, and gave no indications of consciousness. Ormond, touched by his condition, seized his arm, and drew him away, perfectly convinced that he had no power over her, and yet resolved not to lose sight of Membroke. The latter now closed the litter, and ordered the train to proceed. As they moved away, without any sign of opposition from Lady Mary, Richmond threw himself on Ormond's bosom, and both remained for some time overcome by their grief.

We must now leave both, and follow the unhappy Mary, whom we find, several days later, in a totally different situation. Lord Membroke, who had hitherto conducted her, now resigned her into the charge of another, who, he said, would accompany her during the rest of the journey, as he must hasten forward to prepare her uncle for her arrival. Any event that could relieve her from Lord

Membroke's presence was welcome, and she silently acquiesced in this arrangement. She accepted Lord Membroke's farewell with a lightened heart, but could not conquer her repugnance towards him sufficiently to send a greeting of love by him to her uncle.

This day was the most fatiguing she had passed since the commencement of her journey. At last darkness veiled every object, and prevented her from perceiving what road they followed. The involuntary distraction of her own thoughts which daylight produced had now ceased, and leaning back in her seat, she was again tormented by her former scruples. However much she felt relieved by the absence of Lord Membroke, she could draw no good conclusion from it. Again she doubted whether he deserved her confidence. But what, then, was her uncle's letter, which she could not doubt? Why leave her now, without resistance, to another guardianship? How could her escape from the castle of her protectors be of use to him, if he did not secure her in his power? And in whose power was she now? Had she continued her journey with Membroke, should she have reached her uncle? Or did any unknown interest in her person govern all this? She thought of that violent man, from whom she had formerly fled. Could he now command her movements? But the manner of her present treatment, and the person of her new travelling companion, did not point to him. The stranger who conducted her had won her respect and confidence. He was of middle age, his complexion pale, and his noble features deeply grave; but this was coupled with so much mildness, and so well-toned a voice, that a more open friendliness was not to be regretted. Far from offering Mary the assiduous service of a gallant man, he quietly ordered what would be pleasant or necessary, without seeming to render her a service.

To her earnest inquiries as to his views and authority, and the probable length of her journey, he answered, with great gentleness, that she might trust wholly to him, for that nothing should harm her whilst under his protection, and that her true welfare would be considered more at the end of the journey than before. But he informed her that it was necessary to travel without stopping; and her nights were passed in ruins or obscure huts, in which unpromising

abodes were persons so little in accordance with those around her, that Mary was alarmed when left to their attendance. In these places, upon the miserable wooden benches, with the scarcely stopped doors and windows, and with a dish of coarse flour before her, she heard the dignified language of cultivated life, and remarked a familiarity with all its forms, joined with a stoical contempt of the vanity by which it was surrounded. If the deepest bitterness sometimes appeared, the misery to which these cultivated minds were condemned, filled Mary's heart with sympathy, disposing her to pardon, and even to defend, the harshness thus produced.

She soon found that she was among Catholics, who had preferred starving to leaving their country; and the colossal ruins which were often her resting-place by night, appeared to her, though she saw them only in the darkness, to belong to the destroyed monasteries, of which she had heard so much in the history of the rooting out of Catholicism in England. She had little doubt that her guide belonged to these unhappy ones, as his travelling dress and his bare head denoted a priest of the Catholic church. The journey lay through an unfrequented country, and it appeared as if her conductor endeavoured to conceal himself and his suite, as well as her. During the day he rode by her litter, conversing in so remarkable a style that she often passed hours in this manner. He knew how to incite her to talk; and being acquainted with all the remarkable and distinguished persons of his time, he answered her questions with interesting remarks. Leading the conversation to religious subjects, he drew a fearful picture of the sorrows and oppressions which the English Catholics were obliged to bear from the Protestants. He knew how to represent these persecuted people as the victims to their consciences, and as upheld by the strength and consolations of their faith; whilst by a few sharp words, he portrayed the opposite party as lost to God, and distracted among themselves. To all that he said he gave an appearance of truth which interested his hearer. He touched upon the recent persecutions under Elizabeth, and the ordinances to which James was obliged to give a reluctant authority. Mary's education enabled her to join in all this, as she

had been early taught liberality, and knew the state of religious parties in the kingdom.

The interest of Mary's companion seemed to be excited by her clear comprehension of his clever remarks, and he soon obtained from her an unconstrained history of her education, and a description of her instructor, which led to some unforeseen disclosures as to the secret religious views of the important person whom she called her uncle.

On this evening her conductor was obliged to precede the litter, as the path was so bad and uneven as to require great care: and while the weary horses trod it slowly, hollow tones pressed occasionally on Mary's ear, which she could not attribute to the movements of the party, but which brought back to her heart youthful recollections, convincing her that she approached the coast, and that she heard the roar of the majestic ocean. This conviction gave her indescribable emotion, as her fate must now be decided. She had been told that it was on the coast she might expect to find her uncle; and this beloved image arose before her with all the magic of childish love, effacing every other consideration. Carried away by the enthusiastic feeling of the duty of living for him, and sharing his fate, she knelt down in her litter, and gave fervent thanks to God for her holy calling, imploring him to strengthen her soul in order that she might fulfil all to his honour.

The train stopped, and the conductor, approaching the litter with a torch, was surprised to find the lady not only without a trace of weariness, but with brilliant eyes, joyful features, and in so composed a state of mind, that his words of sympathy for the difficulty of the journey died upon his lips. Overpowered by astonishment, he ventured to ask the reason of her appearance.

"Do you think, sir," replied the beautiful maiden, smiling, "that I do not hear the sea? It has sung me to sleep in my cradle, it was the subject of all my youthful dreams, and wherever I hear it, I seem to be at home. I expect relatives, happiness, safety, whenever I hear its greeting; and in the confidence which I now feel, I thank you, worthy man, that you have kept your word—that you have protected me with kindness and generosity, and

have led me towards that duty to which I am called. Oh, say, when shall I be with him? Is he already near me? Shall I soon receive his blessing?"

No person, by whom her thoughts were so well understood as they were by her companion, could mistake her present emotion; and his momentary astonishment gave way to a feeling of sorrow and sympathy which surprised him. He was obliged to remember that to which inclination and the will of men had called him, and he fixed his eyes gloomily on the ground, whilst hers asked an answer to her questions.

"Have patience, dear lady," said he, in confusion. "You have rightly guessed that you are near the end of your journey. The rest you will hear from others, not from me. I know not whether the fulfilment of your hopes lies far or near."

"Well, let us go on. There will at least be security," cried she, "and I may act, or know who has acted thus carefully for me. My mind longs, and I feel strength and pleasure, to dedicate myself to my duty."

A quick command for the continuance of the journey interrupted this short conversation; and soon the train entered a path which appeared smooth, and, being lighted by the breaking forth of the moon, offered no further difficulty. After passing through a small pinewood, the acute traveller discerned the cliffs of the sea-shore, and saw the high roofs and pointed turrets of a building, which, placed among the crevices of the rocks, was half hidden from sight. Mary pressed her trembling hand upon her heart. She was alarmed by this view, which struck her with sad foreboding. But the blue sky now rested above the white chalk rocks in restored clearness, and countless friendly stars, with their ancient names and images, appeared as old acquaintances. A sweet consolation touched her agitated heart; and when she saw, over the point of the tower, the Great Bear, which likewise stood over the pinnacles of Burton Hall, and her aunt's castle in the wood, she smiled like a child who again sees a beloved playmate.

Among the hollows of the rocks an almost unobserved road led smoothly to the castle, which stood, spacious and magnificent, on a

platform extending, on the one side, down to the sea, and on the other, leaving space enough between the building and the rocks to allow of free air, and a garden, which showed as much culture as the barren soil permitted. The whole had the appearance of great strength and good preservation. To Lady Mary, who had been accustomed to the rough situation of such an abode, there was in this nothing alarming. On the contrary, her eyes passed with delight over the castle to the dark mirror of the ocean, which, in majestic repose, or obedient to its own regular movements when chafed by the resistance of the chalky shore, caused its hollow commanding voice to be heard.

“Oh, thou dear companion of my life,” said she, “stand by me and be my protector!”

The train soon reached the well-secured bridge gate, before which they halted, and which opened at the sound of a horn. The high gates of the strong stone walls also opened, and disclosed, faced by a wing of the castle, a spacious and regular court, which, from its yew hedges, and closely-cut, light, shady cypress trees, appeared to be the promenade. From the lower end, a winding path, bounding a more modern pleasure ground, well kept and ornamented, led up to the entrance portal, to which the travellers now approached by the winding paved way. The conductor of the train, attended by several servants, here assisted the lady from the litter, leading her silently to the well-lighted hall, which contained several doors on all sides, and two principal staircases, appearing to be the centre of the whole house. Here she was received by an aged servant, in neat, simple clothing, who bowed deeply to Mary's companion, and would have kissed his hand, had he not prevented him. The conductor then cast a sidelong look on Mary, and stood in confusion.

“Now, Micklas,” said he, “how goes it with our reception? Will you take the best care of the lady?”

The person thus addressed shrugged his shoulders, and answered in Italian, supposing that the lady would not understand him: “You are not so fortunate as you hope. They refuse to receive the lady, and to give her repose. You must first effect that, noble sir; for their graces are more angry than compliant.”

"Enough!" answered the other, well aware that Mary understood him. "Lead the lady to a room, and then conduct me to your mistress. Be sure, lady," added he, turning to Mary, "that I will unfailingly take care of you."

The old man led the lady to one of the lower doors, and, as he opened it, he called out, "Margaret, receive this lady."

Mary entered a small vaulted chamber, with windows reaching to the ground, in front of the winding path. It was lighted by the clear moon, and by its internal arrangements, though clean and pleasant, appeared to be the room of a housekeeper, whom she supposed the old woman to be. A young girl, good-looking, and clad as one of the lower class, started from the window with signs of embarrassment and surprise. Standing close to the lady, she dared not raise her eyes again, but began playing with her silver stomacher chain. Whilst regarding the confused child, Mary forgot all that agitated her at this moment; and with her usual kindness towards any one in trouble, she seized the hand of the struggling girl, and said,

"Be not uneasy, my child; I am no unkind guest. I suppose, added she, "you are the housekeeper's daughter, and have many sisters, and a dear mother, whom you may call to me. Do not trouble yourself for me. But lay aside your disquiet, and we will talk till your father calls me."

The girl sighed deeply, as she looked up, and then hastily back to the window. Her uneasiness was so strikingly shown in her countenance, that Lady Mary, without waiting for an invitation, sat down upon a leathern chair, in order to give her companion time to recover. But it seemed as if this little mystery could not be appeased; for instead of retiring, she yet stood before Mary, and, while continually glancing towards the window, she appeared to change her place in front of the lady, so as to prevent her looking out. At length she burst into tears, and ran, with her apron to her eyes, back to the window. When Mary saw her weep, her surprise overcame her graver reflections.

"I am sorry that I trouble you, dear child," said she, gently. "Cannot I guess the reason? It would lessen your uneasiness, if

you would only show me another place where I may await the return of my conductor."

The sobbing ceased, and the maiden approached with stealthy steps. "Ah, dear lady," said she, "what must you think of me? How ill I have treated you!"

Then she shrank away alarmed, and again looked towards the window, at which Lady Mary heard a slight rattling noise, which seemed to raise the girl's anxiety to the highest pitch.

"No, lady," she at last exclaimed rapidly, "here you cannot stay: it is here—cold: it is not fit for noble people. I will lead you where it is better."

"As you please, my child," said Mary gently, and rising up, she followed the little girl, who now quickly went before her to the entrance of a lighted passage, on each side of which opened high doors. She invited the lady to enter, and then ran from her as quickly as she had hastened before her.

CHAPTER XXI.

Mary found herself in a long and tolerably wide room, on one side of which were four lofty windows, so sunk in the wall that each formed a small closet. From the centre of the ceiling was suspended a beautiful lamp, which spread a clear light over all the objects near it. Two long tables stood at a sufficient distance from one another to leave room for some leathern chairs between. The tables were covered with fine white linen, and upon them were placed some gold and silver utensils. At the upper end of the room stood a large oaken arm-chair, slightly elevated above the rest; a red velvet cushion lay upon it, and before it was a small table, on which were likewise golden and silver vessels.

Mary concluded that this was the dining-room of the castle, and she counted twelve chairs, which she supposed to be the number of the household, whilst the elevated seat at the table might be

intended for some visitor of importance. She entered one of the window recesses, and sitting down, looked once more around her. Her heart turned to her uncle.

"Ah," thought she, "this is the abode which I have been so anxious to reach—this is thy place of residence! Is this thy place at the table? and in what relation livest thou here?"

At this moment her eye fell upon a strange arrangement. At the end of the room, opposite the raised chair, was a screen of carved oak, before which was a staircase, leading to a gallery about midway between the floor and the ceiling. Around this gallery was a railing, and over it hung a silver lamp. Singular as this was, her eye passed it over carelessly, for, from the window where she sat, she obtained a view of the sea, which broke in a regular and deep sound at the foot of the castle. The moon was shining brightly, and Mary now perceived how beautifully the building was situated. It stood in a little bay, protected on both sides by rocks, from the violence of the ocean; and under the windows was a terrace, which showed some vain attempts to produce vegetation.

What recollections now fitted across her mind. She thought of her childhood, when, in her love for flowers, she had endeavoured to overcome the influence of the elements, whilst forming a garden for herself near her father's castle; and she endeavoured to discover how far similar efforts had here succeeded. She was thus led from object to object, until she sank in deep reflection upon the strange events of her life. In the earliest moment of her existence she had been deprived of the first want of tender youth—that of confidential intercourse, and of being able to turn in the doubtful events of life to the ripened views of protecting friends, and she was now obliged to call upon her own mind to be her help and support. When she cast a glance upon her education, she could not help thinking that her instructors had foreboded some such fate for her, for they had always endeavoured to illustrate life to her, to teach her self-dependence, and a quick perception of the truth. But yet how little could they have foreseen what had since occurred to her? How completely had she been torn out of the circle in which she had spent her youth, and in which she had thought herself so securely

placed. She was compelled to acknowledge that circumstances had surpassed all their calculations, for it never could have appeared probable to them that her situation would ever become so helpless, even at the last, as now. The freedom of mind they had given to her would have enabled her to find help in almost all cases; but here the means of maintaining her honour failed her. Even the name which she bore was a doubtful one: she dared not venture to call herself related to any one; for she met with concealment everywhere, and she often put her hand to her forehead, and asked herself whether the past were not a dream, or whether she were not now in a dream, and striving in vain to awake from it.

The first word which she received in the strange world into which she was now thrown—how did it concern her? To what did it lead? Could she overlook that she had ventured much in following a man who had begun by insulting her? Could she conceal the fact, that her reception in these walls had evinced no signs of sympathy, which she would certainly have received had her uncle expected her? And where could she seek for protection, if she were now betrayed? A deep grief filled her heart at the recollection of her generous protectors at Godway Castle, who were now lost to her. They were indeed lost to her, for their strict virtue must separate them from her for ever.

At this conviction hot tears coursed each other down her cheeks, and the image of the noble Richmond, as he stood by her litter, and implored her to return, rose up before her; the tone of his voice, the expression of his eye, rushed back upon her recollection. Now that she ventured, in her loneliness, to recal him to her mind, the portals of her heart sprang open with abundant happiness, and her whole being seemed to stand still, listening and waiting for those wonders which appeared to draw a magic circle around her. She bashfully hid her head; for the sweet enchantment came, drying the bitter tears, and refreshing her troubled heart, whilst adorning it anew with hope and youthful confidence.

A light footstep near her told her that she was no longer alone. She drew her mantle from over her face, and saw an old woman,

who approached through a door at the other end of the room, and carefully closing it after her, bolted it. She then lighted the lamps which were hanging from the wall on the side opposite to the windows; and before Mary could give her any indication of her presence, she rolled away the large arm-chair, and, drawing aside the carpet, opened a trap-door, through which she descended with her light into some hidden place below. Mary perceived that she had been the unintentional witness of some mystery; and feeling uncomfortable at this idea, she hesitated whether she should wait until the woman returned, or quit the room. She decided upon the former, for the bolted door showed her that every disturbance from without was carefully guarded against, and she could not calculate what great harm might occur, should she, by her escape, leave this door unfastened within. But the woman did not return; and the probability now occurred to Mary, that this event had some connexion with him whom she expected to see. But she shuddered at the thought that his abode was under ground. What could have happened that he was obliged to be thus concealed?

She had but little time, however, to give way to such suppositions. A slight noise attracted her eyes to the oak screen, in which a little door suddenly opened, disclosing to her view a long lighted passage. In the old man who entered, Mary recognised the steward of the castle, who had received her upon her arrival. After he had enlarged the entrance by pushing back a panel, he disappeared again, just as she was going to call to him. She resolved, nevertheless, to withdraw herself from this place, where she felt she was an intruder, and she rose to follow him; when so strange a sight presented itself, that she sank back into the window seat, where the deep shadow prevented her being perceived.

Suddenly there appeared on the little staircase two boys, arrayed in white surplices, with rich embroidered scapularies, and carrying large wax tapers. They descended into the room, and then followed a tall haggard woman, in the dress of an Ursuline nun, with a rosary in her hand. She was supported by a priest, in the robes of a Jesuit, in whom, when he reached the room, and the light shone upon him, Mary recognised her travelling companion; but her as-

tonishment chained every movement, and rendered her wholly incapable of acknowledging her presence to him. Many ladies followed: they were all old, and dressed as Ursuline nuns. The party walked in measured order along the room, and approaching the trap-door, descended the staircase without raising their heads, or making any other movement than the slow languid walk of aged persons.

These old man now closed the panel, and followed them, shutting the trap-door after him; so that the lady, after some moments spent in surprise, doubted whether she had really seen all this, or had only been overcome by the images of her fancy. When she had at last satisfied herself that she had not been deceived, many things relating to her own fate rushed upon her mind, and she concluded that her uncle had here sought safety and protection in a convent.

The reflections were suddenly interrupted by a violent knocking at the fastened door, which was followed by a voice, anxiously exclaiming,

"Oh! open the door—open the door! Have pity, and come away, if you are still there!"

Mary recognised Margaret's voice. She supposed she wanted to come in, and wishing nothing so much as to be able to leave this place of strange mysteries, she hastened to the door, and with little trouble removed the bolt. Margaret entered, weeping and deadly pale, and looking round her, said,

"Oh, tell me—I am lost if they saw you—have you seen them, dear lady?"

"Be quiet, child. I was, much against my will, unseen by all. But take me out of this place, for I would not again play so unworthy a part."

"Yes, yes," said Margaret trembling, "I will take you away; I will not conceal anything more from you, for you will not make me unhappy. And yet I despair!"

Sighing, and wringing her hands, she led Mary out of the hall, and both had soon regained the little room, out of which the former had been banished by the strange child. Scarcely had they secured the door of this room, when Margaret fell on her knees before Mary,

and, bursting into tears, conjured her never to reveal what she had just seen.

"Alas! you know not how terribly I should be punished, if any one were to know that I had so thoughtlessly betrayed the secrets of this house. I should not be free, nor be allowed to live with my dear father. I should be obliged to go and pray in the vault, and live in those little dull rooms. Ah! you would kill me, if you betrayed it to my father; and you yourself would meet with a sorrowful fate."

"You do not need to tell me of any danger," said Lady Mary, sorrowfully: "your grief is enough, and I will not increase it by thoughtless prattle. But are you sure that no one but yourself knew of my presence? Can no one else convict me, if I conceal the truth?"

"No, no," stammered Margaret, becoming confused: "if you do not mention it yourself, no one will know it."

"Then take my word, dear child, that I will be silent, and banish every fear or care as regards me, for I would not distress any one, far less such a sweet child as you are."

She stooped down, and imprinted a light kiss on the forehead of the beautiful girl, who, anxious to prove her gratitude, now busied herself to make her comfortable. She relieved her of her travelling cloak, and drawing a large easy chair in front of the turf fire, placed a stool for her feet. She would not rest till Mary had given her permission to unpack her little bundle; and then, having made her comfortable, left her to repose. But Mary was not inclined for sleep: she preferred watching the child, who, having arranged various little affairs, took her place by the side of the table, and began to make a silken net. Her eyes often wandered to the lady, and then she glanced at the window, and then went on with her work.

"Since we have become friends in so short a time," said Lady Mary, "I should like to know, my dear child, why you sent me out of this room? There must have been some important reason, because you must have foreseen the circumstances which took place. Now, do not be again uneasy," for she saw that Margaret's head

sank upon her breast, while her face became red, as if regret and shame had seized her. "If it makes you very uneasy, I will wait until you have more confidence in me, should I remain here long enough."

"Ah!" sighed Margaret, raising her hand to her forehead, "I would rather tell you than appear ungrateful to so kind and good a lady. But you have too good an opinion of me; and yet we are both innocent."

"Both!" said Mary: "what do you mean?"

"Yes," said Margaret, quickly rising. "Come, Lanci, we will tell the lady everything."

Full of surprise, the lady turned her head, and perceived a youth standing in the window, wearing a hunter's dress, with a little plumed cap in his hand, and who now, blushing as much as Margaret, stood timidly beside her.

"Children," said Mary, feeling strongly interested in these young people, "what do you mean? Is your father aware of this?"

"Ah! that is the difficulty," answered Margaret. "You may well suppose he would not allow Lanci to visit me. He is my cousin, and we have grown up together, and we love one another. But they saw Lanci once when he came to the castle, when we were playing on the slopes; and they sent him away to the old forester in the wood. He ought not to visit me, dear lady; but he watches for travellers coming to the castle, and he gets in with them."

"So, so," smiled Mary, "and I have introduced him to-night."

A quick glance from two dark eyes which met hers answered this question in the affirmative; and Margaret added, bashfully,

"See, dear lady, what made me uneasy when you came; for Lanci is as quick as a roe, and had already given me the signal to admit him, and he knocked at the window again and again, not knowing what hindered me from opening it."

"And how did Lanci get in?" inquired Lady Mary.

Both looked at the window, and they could not suppress a laugh, which sounded so like that of innocent children, that Mary involuntarily laughed with them.

"But," said she, forcing herself to be grave, "as your father has once forbidden Lanci's coming, it will cause much alarm if he find him here, which it seems to me may happen any moment."

"Yes," said the youth, "but it is not Margaret's father who wishes to separate us: he must do it, because her ladyship desires it. He has said, more than a hundred times, that if I were a grown-up man, Margaret should be my wife."

"Silence, Lanci," cried Margaret, "we must not talk of that."

"But," said Lanci, "the dear lady thinks that we are naughty children. We do this secretly, because then, if it comes out, her father can say that we were both wrong; and then Margaret will be sent away, and I shall marry her directly."

"No," replied Margaret, "not until you are a man—not till you are a huntsman: it would vex my father, if it were before that."

Lanci threw his head back with the air of one who knew better than she did, and who is quite certain about the matter.

"But you must not tell my father anything of it," said Margaret anxiously.

"Really," answered Mary, smiling, and shaking her head, "I shall be quite burdened with all your secrets. I have been here only a few hours, and you have already obliged me to conceal two important things. Do you know, I think the last is of more consequence than the first?"

Both appeared astonished. They trembled, and involuntarily drew nearer Mary's chair, looking at her imploringly.

"See," said she, "I do not like young people to have secrets. You will certainly be obliged to conceal your little visits by cunning and falsehood, and that is unholy and wrong. How should you remain true to one another, if you are not true in little things? And if Lanci becomes a huntsman, and woos you properly, then he will marry you because your father loves him."

"Remain true?" cried Lanci. "That is not difficult. If I do not see her for twenty years, I shall remain true to her; and if I do not come often to the poor little thing, she is not merry, and she would perish in this cold dull castle. So we do not run all this risk for nothing, dear lady. I have never lied, and perhaps God

will keep from me it, for he sees that I do this with a good intention."

Mary was involuntarily touched by the union of love and child-like purity, which appeared in the words and disposition of both. Margaret was also agitated by her lover's defence of them. Mary saw how the fear of separation acted upon them, and she did not yet know all the difficulties which pressed upon these young people. She therefore discontinued her office of judge, hoping that the good angel who had so long watched over them would still protect them.

"May God be gracious to you!" said she, gently. "How can I advise you, when I am a stranger here? I can make myself harmless by my silence, and I will do so. Pray to God that he may protect you, and not tempt you to falsehood. I will not disturb you. My head is weary; let me rest here, and, undisturbed, you can say to one another whatever you like."

The joyful innocent young people thanked her, and drew back into the deep recess, whilst Mary pursued her thoughts undisturbed.

But it ever happens, that our fancy ceases to be active if the present is brought so home to us that we may expect every moment to be called into action. We then shut ourselves up like a bird, in order to be able to bring our collected powers into action, and the enticing play of fancy, with its many-coloured pictures, fades at the expectation of the next moment.

Thus it happened that Mary could not realize her own situation; and, vaguely agitated, she sank back her weary head, and the low whispering of the young people hushed her to sleep.

CHAPTER XXII.

Thus happily unconscious did she remain, until a ray of light upon her eyes awakened her from a vague and indistinct dream. By the table at which his daughter was sitting, stood the bailiff, holding a waxen taper, and speaking in a low tone to his attentive girl.

"Willingly, dear father," answered the child. "I will readily take care of the poor lady, especially as, by so doing, the duty will not devolve on the old ladies. She shall have the pleasant rooms, for I still hope that she will not be tormented by them."

"Silence!" cried the old man harshly. "Do what lies before you. Be thankful for her ladyship's confidence, and leave your impertinent remarks. The gracious lady has permitted the reverend gentleman to manage all as he thinks proper, and we have been engaged until now in the requisite preparations."

"Stop, good old man," interrupted Lady Mary, unwilling to listen to the secrets of the house, under the guise of apparent sleep: "if your words are not for my ear, do not proceed, for, as you see, I am awake."

Surprised, but with great politeness, he turned quickly to the lady, and, bowing to the ground, he said, with the formal manner of a bailiff—"My gracious lady, the possessor of this castle has honoured me by her commands to bid you welcome; and as the late hour of the evening does not allow of her giving you an audience, she entreats you to take possession of the rooms which are arranged for your reception, and has desired her servants to procure whatever you may require."

"Truly, good old man," said Mary, drawing herself up with her peculiar dignity, "the welcome of the lady, whose unwilling guest I am, comes so late, and after such intolerable neglect, that I might attribute this invitation more to your good manners than to those of your mistress. However, I am not unwilling to be given up to your daughter, and am ready to follow you."

The old man seemed surprised by this proud demeanour on the part of the lady; but domestics who have grown old in service are seldom displeased with those claims to respect which are sometimes so extravagantly set forth by those whom they serve, feeling themselves the less abased by persons who know how to honour themselves. The old man might, besides, have special reasons for evincing respect towards our young heroine. He answered the lady's remarks with a silent bow, and passed on, whilst she, wrapping herself in her mantle, followed him.

Upon the opposite side, on the ground floor of the castle, Miklas opened a door, and the lady entered a spacious anteroom, in the wide chimney of which there burned a large fire, illuminating the costly frescoes which decorated the white walls. The old man crossed this apartment, and requested Mary to step into an adjoining cabinet, whither Margaret only accompanied her. Mary was agreeably surprised by the first sight of this room. It was of that character which seems to invite us to remain, and to offer all that can lead to a contemplative life. A cheerful fire gleamed in the marble chimney which filled one end of the narrow room, and on a handsome carpet were placed many convenient seats, covered, like the walls of the room, with green damask, bordered with gold. It seemed as if a friend had just risen from a confidential conversation, and Mary could not help looking, with hope and longing, to the empty seats. The wide high window opposite contained, in its deep recess a small library, where a beautiful desk, with all its appurtenances, was placed ready for writing; and by a small couch stood, to her joyful surprise, an elegant and fine-toned harp. Numerous portraits and pictures of saints, distributed over the walls, at first escaped her observation, for the light of the wax-candles only faintly gleamed upon their dark frames.

Margret, anxious to make her lady acquainted with her abode, pressed on, to an adjoining room, which, although equally lofty and narrow as the former, showed by its damask curtained bed that it was a sleeping apartment. In a niche of the wall was a clumsy, but richly-adorned toilet table, and an immense Venetian mirror was placed by the window. But what more immediately attracted Mary's

attention was, opposite the door, a niche of black marble, brightly illuminated with wax-lights, and containing the picture of the Virgin and Child, of such heavenly beauty in expression and colour, that Margaret's movement of crossing herself, and bending her knee, appeared more natural than her so quickly passing over the other objects of the room. The picture rested upon an altar of black marble, before which stood a praying-desk, whereupon she saw that her own small Greek Testament had been placed. But beautiful as was this arrangement, Mary felt that it was not in unison with her own feelings; and turning away more quickly than the object merited, she took her Testament from the desk, and placed it on the table by her side.

"Now," cried Margaret, with pleasure, "are you not satisfied with your abode? and will you not receive your little Margaret as your obedient servant?"

"Both, both," said Mary, kindly entering into the lively mood of her companion; "and I beg you to arrange my things, which I see heaped up here."

"Yes, dear lady, trust it to me," said Margaret. "First permit me to take off your cap, and to assist you to change your travelling-dress. That will refresh you, and make you enjoy your evening meal, which my father is preparing for you."

With much cleverness the young one entered upon her new office, and gave vent to many explanations of astonishment at the abundance and beauty of Mary's hair, for she had noticed her new lady's extreme loveliness, and was filled with admiration for her. Mary felt roused by the pleasure of feminine attendance, and the charms of a comfortably arranged room, to both of which she had lately been a stranger; and yielding herself up to her feelings, she did not cease to prompt her little attendant to talk and jest; so that, when the refreshing change of dress was completed, they both, with smiling faces, accepted the invitation of the old man to supper.

At the door of the ante-room stood the old bailiff, who presented to her a slip of paper, on which was written—"Hope, and be consoled." To this she felt at the moment perfectly inclined; for she possessed in a high degree the happy gift of reconciling herself to

every occurrence. Her inexperience led her fully to trust the good advice thus offered to her ; while the hopefulness of youth was balanced by rare quickness of perception, and great strength of feeling. Thus she seldom lost the presence of mind, which was unconsciously founded on these qualities. Pressing the paper in her hand, she walked on, and was delighted with the handsome appearance of the well-lighted room. In the centre was a table, laid with one cover, before which was a large chair, whose back was ornamented with various coats of arms, formed in gold and many-coloured velvets. At a little distance stood a table covered with silver dishes, in which were the smoking viands.

“ Ah !” said lady Mary, on perceiving all these arrangements, “ you have agreeably provided for my housekeeping. Good old man, I must thank you. If you are at the same time steward and cook, you have arranged all in the best manner to make me comfortable after a long journey.”

The gaze of the old man was so steadfastly fixed upon her, that he scarcely heard her thanks, and it seemed as if the mere sight of her was an ample reward. When she approached the table, he took his place behind her chair, respectfully serving her. The enjoyment with which she partook of the meal seemed to both father and daughter a sufficient recompense for their trouble. She praised the excellent fish and game ; and when she asked some questions respecting the hunting in the country around the castle, Margaret ran away to hide her glowing face, and to bring her some preserved fruit.

The heart of the old man was attracted to his lovely guest. She seemed so earnest and dignified, so unconstrained in her behaviour, and withal so cheerful, that every one loved her presence. When the meal was ended, he brought her a silver goblet, containing some French wine, and he could scarcely conceal his delight when her smile, after she had tasted it, told him how much she was gratified.

“ May every drop be blessed to your ladyship,” said he, in an agitated manner.

“ Amen !” answered she gently, as she rose from her chair, and left the room.

When Mary had completed her preparations for the night, she desired Margaret to leave her, but instead of obeying, she stood still, and informed her that she was resolved to remain with her.

"Do not you think, lady, that it will be better for two to be here? No, do not send me away: you know nothing about this wicked castle. God be gracious to us!" added she, crossing herself, "I may not mention it; but it is better that I should remain with you."

"So," said Mary, smiling, "you will be my protector and shield, and in your presence you think me safe from all dangers. Tell me, at least, whether you arm yourself with conjuring tricks, or with sword and pistol, for I wish to know what kind of danger awaits me."

"Oh! dear lady, do not mock me," answered Margaret anxiously: "you may indeed be courageous; but what sometimes happens here makes men's hair stand on end, and you will not be able to bear it so easily as you imagine."

"If this were the case, do you think that your old father would have left us here? Do you suppose he would abandon us to danger, unprotected? Go, Margaret: you have heard too many nurse's tales; but I know no foolish fears, and will remain alone."

"No, no, dear lady, you do not wish to be alone; and besides—" She hesitated.

"Well, besides?—that is, you are wilful, and will not obey?"

"You are angry, dear lady; but indeed I do not deserve your displeasure. And, see, I cannot leave these rooms, for we are locked in."

"Locked in?" cried Mary, and her countenance changed at these words. "A prisoner! Is it possible? Who dares to treat me thus? By what right do they deprive me of my freedom? I command you to tell me who is the owner of this castle. Where am I, and what do you know of their intentions towards me? You dream, girl, and you want to frighten me with your superstitious fears, in order that I may yield to your wish. I will myself ascertain whether you are not deceiving me."

Seizing a light, she hastened through the adjoining room into the

dark empty ante-room, which now looked gloomy and almost horrible. Mary did not heed this ; but irritated at the possibility of Margaret being in the right, she only perceived the entrance door, and flew towards it. In vain she pressed the large iron lock, and holding her light close, she saw that it was bolted on the outside. The conviction of this fact, which she regarded as a personal insult, overpowered her for a moment, and she leaned her head on her arm against the door, as if considering some means of setting herself at liberty. Disregarding the light which she held in the other hand, its flame was almost in contact with her night-dress, when Margaret, weeping, gently withdrew it from her hand.

"Lady, lady, come away! Do not be angry any longer," sobbed Margaret.

"Stay!" shrieked Mary: "I hear footsteps."

"Holy God be gracious to us!" cried Margaret, striving to draw her away.

"No," said Mary, "I will call to this late wanderer, who shall summon your father, and inform him that I am to be treated as a guest, and not as a prisoner."

"No, no ; pray be silent!" cried Margaret, throwing herself before her.

But Mary was greatly excited, and was resolved, if possible, to attract attention. Hearing that the footsteps stopped before the door, she exclaimed, "Look here! Have the goodness either to open this door, or to call Miklas, the steward."

Suddenly some one pushed against the door, and after one or two fruitless attempts to open it, the lock moved, and at length gave way. Mary took the light from Margaret's hands, and held it up before her ; but she trembled with alarm when a woman entered, whose wild appearance betokened insanity. Her gray hair, escaping from beneath a black veil, hung down her tall form, which was covered by very little clothing, leaving her wasted arms and throat bare. But more fearful than all this, was the deathlike hue of her face, and the wild smile upon her lips.

Mary retreated, shuddering with fear. But the lady advanced towards her, and holding out a large branched candlestick, examined

her closely ; and the longer she did so, the more her rigid features changed to an expression of rage and astonishment.

“ Who are you ? ” she demanded in a hoarse voice. “ I ought to know you. ” She rubbed her forehead, and pressing towards her, she exclaimed, with a frightful laugh, “ You are an apparition, from the great world from which they banished me. Ah ! I know you now ! Yet whence did you come ? Who brought you here ! Did that boy Buckingham, whom they call a duke, send you ? Ha ! ha ! do you know me—the beautiful Frances Howard ? You shall not escape your fate ! You are of his blood ! Ha ! revenge is sweet—very sweet ! ”

She stretched out her hand, and seized Mary’s dress. The poor girl had vainly struggled with her alarm ; and now, when the lady’s cold hand encircled her throat, her knees tottered, and she sank senseless to the ground.

When she again awoke to consciousness, the early morning light shone through her window. Her senses slowly returned, and she perceived that she lay in the great canopy bed, in her sleeping apartment, and that several people were busy around her. She attempted to move her arm, but it felt weak and painful, and she was convinced that a vein had been opened. This was the impression of a half-conscious mind, which, as yet, had not united with the feelings of the body. She perceived her travelling companion, who held the lancet, and Margaret was kneeling with a basin in her hands ; she felt herself in the arms of a strange woman, whose pale face was almost close to her own : still she was as indifferent to all these as if they had been inanimate pictures. After the necessary bandage had been placed upon her arm, she sank back from the arms of the strange woman upon a cushion ; the green curtains of the bed veiled her in a kind of twilight, her eyelids fell, sleep took the place of a swoon, and the mind, weakened by alarm, was again united to the reviving body.

After a long and refreshing slumber, she awoke with the feeling of returning strength. The quiet of the room exercised an influence over her which she sought to prolong ; for she began to recal the events which had occurred, and to discover their relation to herself.

But her mind had received too strong an impression, not to revert continually to the last frightful occurrence. The name of Frances Howard was never mentioned, in England, without that deep abhorrence with which one regards the crimes which are found in too high a sphere to be visible in their whole truth and nakedness to the people. This name, and the crimes with which it was associated, were unknown to Mary; but when she recalled the look of this fearful woman, she read in it a mind destroyed by the reproaches of conscience, and she shuddered at the thought of the presence of this fury, who, in her madness, had taken her for some object of her wrath.

She examined her whole situation, to see what protection remained for her under such threatening circumstances; and she felt lively gratitude towards Margaret and Miklas, for endeavouring to guard her. It was evident that the latter had secured the door in order to protect her from this wandering maniac, and that Margaret would not alarm her by disclosing the truth; but that her own violence had frustrated their endeavours, and that the frightful apparition was attracted by the noise she had made at the door.

Warmed by a feeling of gratitude towards both her attendants, and anxious to acknowledge it, she drew back the curtain, and saw Margaret sitting on a low stool, busily employed upon the silken net which lay upon her knee. A joyful exclamation from the girl accompanied her glance at Mary, and running to the bed she kissed her hands, and seemed as if she could not sufficiently evince her delight at her recovery.

"But," added she slyly, "dear lady, you are not angry with me and my old father?"

"Good girl," answered Mary, "how your gentleness and kindness soothes me. I alone brought so much alarm upon you. I acknowledge the care of your father, and your own forbearance, when, by my violence, I occasioned all from which you endeavoured to guard me. Forgive me, and be assured that I will never again frustrate your good intentions."

"Ah, dear lady, you are like a holy angel!" cried Margaret.

"What have I to forgive you? God's grace, and the Virgin, have protected us, or we had been overcome. But can you imagine what occurred? Those who know it, hardly believe it."

"Tell me, dear Margaret, if it does not overstep your duty, who was the frightful person that alarmed us, and why she is permitted to go about thus?"

"Ah, dear lady, who can prevent her? She is the mistress of this castle."

"Mistress of this castle?" repeated Mary, in deep alarm.

"Yes, so it is. The lady is very rich, and her husband has been dead many years, though I well remember the pleasing melancholy man. God be gracious to his soul! He was not happy, and people said strange things of him. He must have known much sorrow, for he was constantly sighing. We used to hear him walking about in the night, and the servants often found him, in the morning, on the cold stones in the great hall, or lying asleep on the staircase. He did no harm to children, for he loved them tenderly; and I, and Lanci, and some fishermen's children, used to sit happily around him, while he cut out pictures and dolls for us. The noble lady was not so ill then as she is now, but the household did not love her. They said that her lord had been a heretic, and that she had endeavoured to free him from his melancholy by the aid of holy church; and therefore they quarrelled and remained separated. It thus happened, one morning, that the lady did not know of his disappearance, and as she was leaving her chamber she found his corpse lying by a locked door, in a narrow staircase, near her bed-room. Since that time she has been very uneasy, going about during the night to seek my lord, who, she fancies, is still alive. But he has been at rest nearly ten years. My lady is sometimes aware of this, when she is well; but she soon forgets it again."

The uncomfortable impression which Mary had received was not softened by this tale, and she was terrified at being in the power of an insane person. She was extremely anxious as to the future, and feeling herself perfectly well, she longed to leave her bed.

"Dear lady," said Margaret, "wait a moment. Father Clement

will feel your pulse before he permits this. I will call him instantly."

"Who is Father Clement?" asked Mary. "Do not call him. I feel quite well, and only wish you to request your father to send to me my travelling companion, with whom I must speak."

"That is Father Clement, dear lady," replied Margaret; "the same who assisted us last night, and who opened the vein in order to recover you."

Mary was not much surprised by this discovery, and only the more anxiously wished to leave her couch; for she longed to be active, instead of remaining in this insecure mysterious situation. Before Margaret could prevent it, she seized the silken coverlet, and springing out of bed, she hastily began to dress herself; but she soon found that her arm was powerless, and was obliged to ask for Margaret's assistance. Having finished her toilet, she entered the sitting-room, where, seated by the fire, and in the simple dress of the order of Jesuits, she found her travelling companion; and opposite to him a woman, in whom, at the first glance, Mary recognised the person in whose arms she lay when she awoke. Both were in deep conversation, and were not a little surprised when Mary, completely dressed, and with firm dignity, approached them. Father Clement seemed unable to collect his thoughts, and his appearance betrayed more confusion than anger.

"You surprise me, my lady," said he, looking down. "I wish that you had not so soon supposed yourself recovered. I intended to recommend quiet."

"Quiet, sir?" answered Lady Mary; "my mind only requires quiet. I am myself the best judge of my health."

A movement of the pale woman attracted Mary's intention; and turning towards her, she said—"If I do not mistake, I am indebted to you for kind assistance during the night."

The woman acknowledged this by bowing her head; and still keeping her eyes on the ground, she replied, "Father Clement summoned me to this service: you are not indebted to me for it."

Notwithstanding the coldness of these words, Mary could not

remove her eyes from the person by whom they were uttered, and whose tall and slender figure, though wrapped in a plain black dress, might still be called beautiful. Her pale face, regular in its features, with its humble and pious expression, involuntarily led the recollection back to the affecting pictures of those saints upon whom her thoughts seemed to dwell. Her head-dress recalled to Mary's remembrance the nuns whom she had seen in the night, though there was now no veil or scapulary, and the narrow white bands on the forehead and chin alone remained. When, from a feeling of delicacy, she withdrew her eyes, she met those of Father Clement, who seemed to watch the impression which Mary had received.

"Sir," said she with firmness, "you must understand that I expect from you an explanation of many things. This is quite as necessary for me as repose, which, it appears, is not yet to be my portion."

"I am prepared," answered the father; "but first I must request you to see in me only the agent of higher powers, to which I am subject, even against my will."

"Perhaps you will be pleased to permit me to withdraw, reverend sir," now said the pale woman, humbly approaching the father: "I have other duties to perform."

"Go, dear daughter," said Father Clement, "but hold yourself ready to share the loneliness of this lady, who is recommended to your protection."

"I am neither mistress of my time nor my will: happy those to whom it is vouchsafed to obey," answered she, without moving her pale features. She bowed her head, which the father touched, pronouncing a blessing; and she passed by Mary as quietly as if she were a spirit, without any greeting except a bend of her head.

Mary regarded all this with a feeling of astonishment, as she said, "Am I in the company of Catholics? Are you a priest of that faith? And that lady, does she belong to the sisters of St. Ursuline?"

Father Clement sat down quietly at these words, pointing to the seat which had just been left vacant; and then, raising his eyes devotionally, answered—

"Yes, madam, you have said it. Here, in these neglected walls, has a small pious company taken refuge, in order, by remaining true to the holy faith of their fathers, under God's assistance to shield in their fatherland every germ of this persecuted holy fruit, till the day when it shall be shown whose kingdom England is. There is no longer any reason to hide this from you, for your disposition assures us from treachery."

"Noble sir," said Mary, "I know that your society is contrary to the laws of my country, and it is no pleasant discovery to find myself involved in it. Meanwhile, far from blaming those who sincerely profess your faith, I lament extremely that, by persecuting them, any one should think to uphold the dignity of our church."

"Very right," replied he, evidently pleased. "But whoever blindly leaves our blessed church, can only attain victory through worldly power."

"This unjust violence against conviction and conscience is used at all times, and by all parties," said the lady, "and you must not attribute to the spirit of our church that of which only its tyranny is guilty. Holding such means to be incompatible with this spirit, I would never give aid to a similar persecution, acknowledging myself no earthly judge. But now, I ask you, how has my destiny taken this direction, and what are the views which have led me here?"

"To free you from the evils of the blackest treachery," answered Father Clement, emphatically; "and out of compassion to your youth and innocence, which were destined to misery. I cannot inform you who it is that takes so great an interest in your life, for to me, a priest of the holy order of Jesus, is only allotted the blind fulfilment of what is thought right and best."

"What do you mean?" interrupted Lady Mary, vehemently agitated. "I have been deceived—by whom? Say, I beseech you—by whom?"

"That it was by Lord Membreke, you cannot be in doubt," replied Father Clement. "He knew no other method than that forged lecter to withdraw you from the protection of the family with whom you resided."

“ Good God ! ” exclaimed the unhappy girl, falling back in her chair. “ Then I foreboded rightly ! But how can you call a letter forged,” cried she, quickly raising herself, “ which was written by his hand, and sealed with the seal which I have so often seen in his possession ? ”

“ Poor child ! It was easy to deceive you ; for you are ignorant of the villanous art by which a handwriting may be imitated, and the theft of a signet-ring was no familiar thought to you.”

Mary covered her pale face with her hands, and a stronger feeling of desolation and misery than she had ever before experienced, pressed upon her mind at this discovery. Her first flight, when she was sinking under hunger and weariness, appeared to her less appalling ; for she had then the hope that her uncle lived, and that with him she should find protection, love, and consolation. After some minutes of deep emotion, which Father Clement, sunk in grave thought, sought not to interrupt, her mind regained composure : she raised her head, and looking sorrowfully at the announcer of this sad intelligence, she cried, in a tone of the deepest anguish,

“ Forgive me, if, after having been so cruelly deceived, and deserted by my natural protectors, I now learn to feel the misery of distrust, and cannot wholly resist it towards you, whom I thought good because I did not know you to be otherwise. Prove what you say to me, sir. If I might suppose that you only have now deceived me, my life would be less hopeless, and a prospect would still remain to me of reaching that protector for whom I yearn. Think,” she continued, bursting into tears, “ that if Lord Membroke has deceived me, and knows nought of my uncle, almost every hope disappears of my finding him. And now speak, I conjure you—speak the truth ! Stay,” cried she anxiously, as Father Clement opened his lips : “ hear me farther. It is said that those of your faith consider all of my creed as shut out from the ties of Christian charity. I cannot believe it : I will not think thus of you ; but yet you may feel indifference for the fate of a being whom you call a heretic. I wish not that you should feel more warmly towards me than your faith permits ; but remember, sir, that we are bound to speak the truth—that the soul which, for the furtherance of any

plan, leaves the path of truth, poisons itself. Oh, sir, for your own sake—for the sake of the holy name of your order—speak truly! Remember that I also believe in that name, and that through it we shall receive either punishment or forgiveness.”

The father had not listened unmoved, and perhaps such warnings had not been heard without embarrassment; but the recollection of the order to which he was bound healed the wounds of his conscience, reminding him that he was under an obligation to further, by any means, an end which would be pleasing to God.

“My lady,” he began in a dignified tone, “you overlook the prudence of those who trusted you to my care, in order to annihilate the prejudice spread by the enemies of our holy faith, for the purpose of alarming those who, having no peace in their fallen state, long to return to the bosom of our church. The servants of this church are insulted, persecuted, and hunted through the land, so wearied by false delusions, and they seek the lost fold. I know not who revealed your sad fate to my superiors; but your innocence has touched the exalted men of Jesus; and through their influence—a power invisible, but not slight—I received the magic word which obliged Lord Membroke to resign you. Your own thoughtless expressions, and the inquiries of your friends, may have led Lord Membroke to the plan of your escape. More fortunate than those friends, he discovered whom it was you strove to find; his handwriting was imitated, his seal stolen, and both placed in the hands of Lord Membroke. You were deceived; though not a line of this letter showed the disposition of the man, whose handwriting might be imitated, but not his tone of affection.”

“Ah, you speak truly,” cried Mary, overpowered by the strange confirmation of her own feelings.

“Thus the wicked triumphed; and you followed the miserable betrayer, who had sold you to the noted spendthrift to whom he led you.”

“Now,” cried Mary, “passing over all else, how shall I now succeed in putting myself, as speedily as possible, under the protection of my relation? May I increase my obligation to you, who have already done so much, and to these secret friends whom

I cannot thank? Can I describe to you the happiness of this reunion?"

"My lady, you have experienced the utmost of my power and agency: my directions were to bring you here. An accident must have delayed the further instructions which I expected to find here; and this has caused your unfriendly reception. The expected orders will determine the execution of your just wish. Be patient till then, and do not, in useless longings for the meeting of which you speak, disregard the circumstances which here offer you a safe and peaceful life."

"Cannot you at least inform me if my uncle has received intelligence of my present abode? For the assumption of his dear name for such bad purposes, and my own forebodings, make me suppose that the whole history of his political situation is an invention of my betrayer. To have believed it for a moment, gives me the deepest shame, for it stained the exalted character of the man towards whom I ought never to have permitted such an insult."

"I am not sufficiently acquainted with the fate of this man to give you intelligence of it; but I think I have heard that it has taken a turn which prevented his doing you a service himself. He will be well satisfied to know that you are safe and happy; for however the latter might be the case in the house of the Duke of Nottingham, that place was shown to be insufficient for your safety."

"Oh, sir," cried Lady Mary, "on whom does that reproach rest but myself? My own weak credulity deprived me of the protection which was sufficient for all events."

"You are right, and I must say this; for your self-confidence is greater than can be compatible with your youth and experience."

Mary was touched by the gentle reproof of the old man, to whose opinions she had listened with respect; and as young persons are generally attracted towards those who gently warn them of their faults, Father Clement could not have pursued a plan more likely to retain her favour. Raising her eyes with an expression of humility, as if fearful that she had offended him, she said, in a gentle tone,

"I see that you are right, and acknowledge your great kindness in showing me this. I was deprived of the advice of my relations but too early, and my faults have therefore remained uncorrected. But as, through the goodness of God, I have received this warning from you, I will no longer be indulgent to myself. May I but confess one wish, which has become very earnest since I have known that I was deceived?"

"Speak, my dear daughter," said Father Clement, with the kind tone produced by the lady's manner: "I will listen with sympathy, and, as far as possible, comply with your wishes."

Mary opened her lips to speak, but a deep blush covered her face, and her head sank on her breast. After a few moments of embarrassment, she looked up timidly, as she said,

"Do you think, honoured sir, that an honest representation of the truth, and of my own weakness, can reconcile the noble family whom, by my imprudent flight, I have so deeply offended? And can you show me a way to effect this?"

Father Clement hesitated; and had not Mary just renounced trusting to her own judgment, she must have seen that this idea was evidently disagreeable to him.

"There will be opportunity, in the course of time, for your justification," said he, after some consideration. "At present you must refrain from making yourself known, as only the strictest concealment can guard you from the snares of that powerful man, against whose influence even your uncle could not protect you."

"Tell me, sir, who is this fearful man, who is so much my enemy, and what are his motives for persecuting me?"

"Have you never heard the name of the Duke of Buckingham? He it is who pursues you. Be content to know that he desires your destruction, and do not ask me to make further disclosures, alike unbecoming my character to mention, or yours to listen to."

Mary was silent, overpowered by fear and shame. After a long struggle with her emotion, she timidly continued—"And am I safe here? Shall I not be discovered? Who grants me protection here? Who must I thank besides you?"

"The powerful superiors of my order, who, in this house, which

is under their special care, have already saved many innocent persons, persecuted by the world. To them you are indebted. But do not trouble yourself about these obligations: your relatives will acknowledge these claims, and know how to reward them."

"But, sir," cried Mary, her features exhibiting her fear and uneasiness, "am I not under the influence of that horrible woman? Or how am I safe from her?"

"You will be introduced to her in the course of the day, and will then be convinced that whoever does not maliciously oppose her at night, has nothing to fear from one who possesses the highest claims to our compassion and respect. She seeks to repair a life, sacrificed to worldly desires, by pious resignation to our holy mother church; and since the death of her husband, who was inaccessible to such true repentance, she has given her hereditary castle as an abode for the holy sisters in whose convent she was educated, and to whom she has now again united herself by holy vows. You will find worthy society among the women of this house, and, above all, in intercourse with sister Electa, whom you saw here—a true image of Christian virtue and feminine humility. However your religious opinions may differ, I doubt not that you will join in the pious arrangement of the day, for it will secure to you an employment worthy of the highest human regard. In order not to increase the anxious feelings of your hostess, who is with difficulty convinced that you will not scoff at what you see, I beg you to wear the simple dress of this house, and thus secure that peace which we wish to keep undisturbed."

"What!" cried Lady Mary, with great vehemence, "shall I wear the dress of a nun? I, a Protestant? Shall I, even outwardly, put on the appearance of an act which would separate me from the church to which I belong, both by birth and from conviction? No, sir, you cannot be in earnest, or do you think so basely of our zeal for its doctrines? I will readily conform to the arrangements of the house which lends me protection, if that can be done without joining in customs which I have been taught to regard as irreconcilable with the pure doctrines of the gospel. I can truly promise you that my reverential conduct shall banish every

fear of mockery ; but at the same time my own opinions shall be respected, and not regarded as contemptibly concealed under an appearance of deceit."

Mary observed the grave, reproachful look with which the priest listened to her vehement expressions ; and when she had somewhat recovered herself, her language appeared to her, when contrasted with this quiet reproach, as an outbreak of that irritation which she had before discountenanced. The silence of Father Clement strengthened this reproach, and quickly regaining the gentleness of her disposition, she said, with timidity, "I feel what you would say, noble sir, and see that I was more hasty than your proposal justified. If I am blameable, pardon me. I reproach myself, and would not vex you."

The father bowed his head, slowly and silently, as if he would leave the lady in doubt as to the reception of her excuse. With his eyes fixed on the ground, he solemnly bade her farewell, and, without further reply, left the room.

When Mary found herself alone, the loneliness of her situation overpowered her ; she sank upon the carpet, and hid her face in the cushion of the chair, weeping bitterly. She had never felt so desolate. The anger of the father, and the manner in which he had left her, made her sensible, for the first time, of the assistance he had rendered her, and how lonely her life now was ; for a glance told her that her hopes were gone, and that she was separated from all whom she could trust, and from all who had ever exercised or felt kindness towards her. For the first time she felt her formerly healthy heart pierced by a dejection, from which her strong mind, her youth, and hope, had hitherto preserved her. Bodily weakness, and the impression made by this abode, whose gloomy secrets were now revealed to her, threw her into a state of nervous undefined terror, to which was added a fear for her personal safety, which seemed to enchain her mind and thoughts. All the circumstances of her situation appeared to depress her, and she gave free course to her tears : to weep till death should deliver her, seemed her only fate. This she thought could not be far distant ; but it is seldom that our bodies are destroyed by mental grief, although, in

the first agony of sorrow or bereavement, we hope and expect this deliverance.

After some hours of exhausting grief, Lady Mary arose from her knees, retaining only a confused idea of what had occurred; and this was succeeded by such a total want of courage to contend against circumstances, that had any one now thrown the veil of the Ursulines over her, she would have received it as a boon. This mood she was permitted to indulge freely, for, either by accident or intention, she was not disturbed until the hour for dinner had arrived, when she was summoned to her meal by Margaret. The old man, who silently waited on her, seemed astonished at the change in her appearance, and at the silent movement of her hand, by which she refused, untasted, the viands and the contents of the golden goblet. Miklas exchanged looks with his daughter, whose sympathy was evinced in silent tears. Margaret had long removed the last untouched dish, and waited till Mary should move; but the latter, absorbed in deep thought, gave no indication of being conscious of her situation. The old man bore this like a well-trained servant, but Margaret threw herself on her knees before the lady.

"Dear lady, will you lie down?" said she, weeping. "You must be very ill."

As if a thunderbolt had fallen before her, Mary started at these words, and rising up hastily, she exclaimed—"What do you want? How—where shall I go?"

"Will you not lie down, dear lady?" said Margaret, more timidly. "You seem to require repose."

"Yes—rest, rest," sighed Mary: "that is necessary—very necessary; but where do you say I shall find it?"

"On your own bed," replied the girl, encouraged.

Mary regarded her absently, and with a sigh, which seemed to break her heart, suffered herself to be led away.

Evening had spread its shadow over Mary's couch, and she still lay there, breathing uneasily, and sunk in bodily weariness and mental stupor, which seemed to her almost a separation from life. Margaret awaited her commands in a corner of the room. Suddenly,

Mary was alarmed by a dark shadow, which passed between the window and the bed. She dreaded a new terror, and her first thought was of the cruel being of the former night. But it was the sister Electa, who said, in a gentle voice, as she approached the bed,

"The peace of God be with you, my lady. I would offer you my services: bend your arm."

Mary raised herself with difficulty, and answering gently the sister's greeting, accepted the service, which the latter performed with great skill. This being completed, she silently regarded the pale face of her charge for a moment, and then said,

"You are ill, independent of this arm, dear lady, and your hands are hot with fever. Shall I prepare you a cooling drink?"

"You are very kind," replied Mary, "but I am quite well, and my head only requires repose. Repose! it is difficult to find it, and therefore I am patient when it fails me."

"Rest alights upon us," said Electa, "when with pious trust we banish all trouble, relying upon Him who watches over all."

"I hope," answered Mary, "I have this trust, but my mind is not now clear. My head is confused, and here," added she, sighing and touching her heart—"here I feel a heavy burden."

"Nothing humbles us more deeply," replied her grave companion with gentleness, "than to learn that our overrated powers of youth and inexperience are insufficient to arrange life according to our will. This knowledge is a gift of heaven, and there is no greater happiness than to await the will of the Highest."

"Yea," said Mary, involuntarily led into this conversation, "I can imagine a peace of soul arising from harmony between ourselves and the outer world. But this is the end, not the means; and we cannot gain it unless we hold ourselves ready, with all our powers, to act under the ever-changing occurrences of life, in such a manner as to satisfy our conscience. If courage and strength disappear," added she sorrowfully, "the worst has happened to us."

"Ah!" sighed Electa, after a pause, "how dangerous is action, thus produced, in a young and confident mind! The peace which I mean comes without our merit or struggling, and cannot be won by mere human strength. Forgive me, but it shocks me to hear the

highest of all gifts slandered through the pride of man. In order to find peace, we must renounce the world, which continually tempts us to disobey the will of God."

"My mind is fatigued and weak," said Mary gently, "and I would not annoy you, for, of course, you have found the peace you describe."

"No, no," interrupted Electa, with more warmth than Mary could have expected from her quiet manner. "No; think not that I belong to those to whom the Lord gives peace. To few only does this come. I bear the curse of the world still, and my prayer is unfruitful. Ten years since, I renounced the world in true repentance, but indulged sin has left its sting in me. And you, poor young creature, seem to expect, among the allurements of the world, to find a peace not even to be found within these holy walls, which defy all the temptations of the world."

Mary could not see, without sympathy, this disquieted heart struggling under the veil of supposed resignation. Nothing more effectually releases a noble mind from its own grief, than to witness the sorrow of another. The young wish to alleviate, whilst the more experienced are content with sympathizing.

"You did not find peace in the beaten track," asked Mary inquiringly, after a short pause. "While in the world, you should have reconciled yourself with it. Now, it stands as an enemy behind you, and your peace is destroyed by the hatred you feel. This hatred cannot come from God; His world is a holy revelation, and it arises from our own imperfection if we see it burdened with sin."

"Say not so. You know not what you say, and you are wrong. God wills that we should hate the world, in order to turn towards heaven, and to obtain that reconciliation which can be ours only by fleeing from temptation. You still unhappily depend upon yourself; but if we abandon our self-trust, and commit all our responsibility to an inspired superior, we see how needlessly we have fatigued ourselves in unregulated activity. Spiritual obedience is a gift from God; and guided by our spiritual superior, we are removed from sin."

In what manner," inquired Mary, "do you think those privileged spiritual guides can lead us erring ones, and become answerable for us? Do they not first begin with themselves? And had they no assistance from themselves, to raise them to the height which makes them able to guide others?"

"Our holy church," answered Electa, "gives her servants, without leading them through the stained paths of life, the holiness which they are called upon to impart to the weak. A life passed in holy solitude and innocence—a life to which an earthly wish never attaches itself—a life so far exalted above us by the institutions of the church—shall not be measured by the means which our earthly being puts into our hands. If the histories of the saints be true, their endeavours were so far above ours, that to partake of them were already a sanctification. Our course lies far from theirs; yet they look from above to their sighing ones, and know where to find them, and the pure atmosphere of their presence inspires us with the first horror which we feel at our worldliness. For, gradually to strengthen the mind—to open the soul—to confess the sins to another which we will not own to ourselves—to hear the truth declared from the holy mouth of the pure—to lay ourselves open to him without deception, and to hold ourselves not lost in sin if we obey him—yes, to feel the burden of our sins borne by him, to see him made responsible for them, if we confidently follow what his holy will commands—this binds the vain passions, and places the guides of our souls on an equality with us, though they stand so high above us."

"It must be an enviable fate," said Mary, "to find what you describe. To unite oneself to a highly gifted, pure mind, to learn from its clearness what is dark in ourselves, to bestow and receive truth—this is, indeed, a happy lot; and whoever has known it, and can afterwards remain lonely, fades the earlier to the ground."

"England," cried Electa, with holy zeal, "is become poor in pious consolation. The sinner asks assistance from the sinner, who sighs, burdened by the same need, receiving only the interchange of the feeling, not the power to expiate. All who indulge in the new spirit—like you, my lady, as it seems to me—they all regard

worldly ties in the same light as those spiritual ones which are become tasteless to the world. The root of our holy faith still lives, and puts forth its branches and tendrils; but the hand of the gardener, which ought to train them, fails, and they fall withering to the ground."

"You seem to refer to the church, good sister. Do you believe yours to be still in the state of its first establishment? I have always honoured those who showed their devotion by forms in which so many thousands have sunk their religious feelings. That which succeeded them stands without example in history, and spreads great blessings abroad; but its power was man's work, which when no longer required, must gradually decay, like all earthly things, although there may still exist examples of piety and love worthy of the first great founder. But this is individual, not the spirit of the church, which requires now another development; and to this end I think the Reformation has arisen: not as man's work against man's work, but from the want of a higher spiritual life, unattainable by the laity through the priests: in a word, a life with God, and the true enjoyment of the Gospel. Thus have I been taught, and I look upon your church but as an honourable thing gone by, knowing well how to separate from its true worth that which necessarily results from its decay."

"Unhappy child!" cried Electa, crossing herself; "what a spirit speaks in you! This temptation is hard to me! Why must I hear the weakness of our holy church thus assailed? Why must I behold a mind which thinks itself safe in its frightful heresy?"

"It was not my intention to vex you," interrupted Mary. "I was not in a state to argue such grave matters; but you have animated me to it, and I cannot suppress my own convictions. My mind is not hardened. I hope I am a Christian, and my heart fully believes in the gospel. Let us end this."

Here Father Clement came forward. He had probably been a listener to the conversation, and as Electa left the room immediately, she did not answer Mary's remarks. The latter turned towards the father, with a smile which showed how much she wished to hold fast her only acquaintance in her strange and lonely condition.

But Father Clement avoided the glance of her re-animated eye ; and after a few words of inquiry respecting her health, he coldly announced that he came to say farewell, for that he must leave the castle that night.

At this news, Mary felt as if struck by a sudden blow, and overpowered by a rush of anxious thought, she covered her face with her hands. Father Clement, quietly, and apparently unmoved, thus proceeded :—

“ You will find honourable protection here, and every opportunity of bringing your spirit into a fitting state. You may have instructive intercourse, you may gain love and favour, and find that sympathy which the virtuous feel for the true interests of life. But, above all, remember your gratitude to God, that through the messengers of his grace upon earth you are saved from the snares of sin. My commission respecting you being ended,” added he, with gentler voice, “ I leave you to the protection of heaven, and will beseech God to give you that mind which secures peace to you and those around you. The Lord bless you, and—”

Mary felt his cold hand upon her head, and interrupting the blessing, which must be followed by separation, she seized his hand, and turning towards him, her countenance agitated by grief and anxiety, she cried, trembling,

“ No, no, you must not leave me ! you must not take my last consolation from me ! You only frighten me, to punish my impatience this morning. No,” cried she, more quickly, and interrupting his answer, “ you cannot leave me unprotected in this strange place. Stay, I beseech you. I will be gentle, and obedient as a child to her parent. I will do all that the frightful lady wishes ; for I can preserve my inward faith, and in following external forms I shall learn humility and forbearance. I will put on the dark nun’s dress,” she added, not noticing the increased agitation of Father Clement ; “ I will descend into the dark vault where you worship God ; and there, as here, I can pray. But do not leave me ; or, if you must, take me with you. Do not fear any journey for me. I will leave behind all that outward care requires. I will go on foot with you, for indeed I am strong. Oh, do not deny me—do not rob me

of the last ray of hope, and you shall find me persevering and unwearyed in all that you require."

Father Clement listened with astonishment and emotion. In her agitation, Mary had betrayed her knowledge of the subterranean church, and displayed towards him a trust and attachment which made his heart doubt whether he could fulfil the command which drove him from her. But the struggle with his human feeling was short; the accustomed influence of obedience returned; and he endeavoured to console himself with the hope, that, by the higher will of his superior, her fate would take a better turn.

"I must leave you here," he said, having composed himself, while her eye watched anxiously for his answer, "but with the fervent conviction that it is for your good. I have no free choice: it is not for me to change or to choose what falls to my share. The first duty of our calling is to obey without murmuring, and it contents us."

"Ha!" cried Mary, rising, and stepping up to him with glowing cheeks, "where is the fearful power which holds your clear mind in such bondage? Who are you, that you resign the great right of man, to follow his own convictions? How have you been so enchained, as to deprive yourself of free judgment, and, without purpose or aim, live a forlorn being, uncertain whether the way which you tread, with eyes closed, be that in which you will by and by wish to be found before God? Can that be the voice of conscience which calls you to leave the desolate being, who, enticed by falsehood, driven from honourable protection, sees herself, under cruel circumstances, surrounded by dark threatening dangers? Oh, cast it from you, and obey the holy spirit which rules the actions of better men! Oh, that I could persuade you, for your own sake and for mine!"

There was a pause. The father was alarmed at himself; but endeavouring with his whole strength to overcome the temptation, he answered, with more coldness than might have been expected—"Stay your thoughtless speech. Your perception is bold, and overrules your judgment. Know that to obey, requires greater strength than to resist; that he only can resign external freedom, who feels secure within; and that the path upon which the banner of our Saviour

waves, must be the true one, whether it lead over rocks and ruins, or through quiet secluded valleys. You cannot guess how I honour the wisdom of those who give you here the opportunity for self-knowledge."

"Reprove me as you will," cried Mary quickly, interrupting his long speech, "but leave me not! Think me as inexperienced as you will, but be convinced that I only the more need your protection. I think that you know who I am, and I will obey your directions; but speak not of the strange power through which I suppose I became known. Or," she added, more gravely, "I must think that who I am, and to whom I belong, is a secret withheld from me alone, and that those superiors intend to keep me, a freeborn person, languishing here as a prisoner. Oh, fearful fate! Can you see it, and yet pity not my youth, nor the grief of those who perhaps are endeavouring to discover me, and from whom I am here unlawfully detained?"

"By thus regarding what you cannot alter," said the father, "you make your situation worse than it really is. Take things as you find them, and leave the rest to heaven."

"Ah, what advice for a heart which has had so much to struggle against, and which is now thrown back on its own strength; which, moreover, is so young and inexperienced, that, according to your own words, its first step is to be dreaded."

"From this you must learn how unfit you are to guide yourself; and thankfully acknowledge that the help which comes to you bears that experience which must be to your profit."

"No, no! you in vain try to persuade me that this secret ruling power is a benevolent one. It consults its own interest, and takes away the freedom of those to whom it offers help. I explain myself freely. I will act for myself. I will quit these walls; and to-day I will seek, with God's help, the protection of him who alone has the right to command me."

"As you thus renounce this holy protection, thank God that no one within these walls is authorized to assist you. I warn you once more—reign yourself calmly to your situation. Resistance might

bring upon you all that you most fear, now perhaps turned aside."

"Your enigmatical words make me think that I am brought here for other purposes than to withdraw me from shame. You know more. It is certain that you know what is my destiny. Have mercy, then, and take me out of this place, which offers so much to alarm me. I must trust you, though you declare yourself so base, so mean, as to be the servant of that strange power. You have a heart: it cannot be so stifled by obedience as not to tell you what is right and human. Fear not my vehemence, which is stronger in me than I ever felt, for I will try to control myself; and I must trust you, as I wish you would trust yourself. Within a few hours my mind has become weak, and a deadly fear is round me, lest, in this weakness, that should happen which ought not. See," said she gently, and approaching him with timidity, "I tremble for the health of my soul. You cannot deny that a different creed to mine is here strictly followed. They will wish to convert me. Even this morning, the fear of this overcame me; but I would die in my sorrow, rather than return to your church."

"Wretched child!" said the priest, more feelingly. "It grieves me to see you in error. Why were you not, from your youth, under the gentle guidance of our church. You would then have found, in every brother in the faith, the relations who have been torn from you. It is the curse of the heretical church, that each man believes the health of his soul preserved only by despising what is holy to another; and when the mind is wearied, as yours is, where is there support in your church. When sinking in the vain baseness of the world, where can you find a safe port in which you can rest? It is in the bosom of our church alone; and you fear this support, even while feeling your loneliness!"

"Enough, reverend sir!" interrupted Mary quickly. "Your words prove that it is not without cause that I fear to be assailed by the zeal of your faith, while in this house; but that which I profess gives me strength, even now, to oppose all false reasonings. I am born free, and belong to a noble race, although over its name, in my person, a veil is drawn, confounding truth with falsehood. In

accordance with this, I cannot serve unknown men for unknown ends; and if you must leave me, I desire at least to know the rules, that I may come to an open understanding concerning them."

Mary had regained her energy. Her beautiful face was tinged with a slight colour, her slender figure had a royal bearing, and the tone of her voice denoted the feelings of her heart. Father Clement saw this, and for the first time felt how little her fate was likely to be improved by it. But he sympathized with her, and could not overlook her advantages. Yes—even a fear of the power which he served came over him, while he seemed obliged to endeavour to protect her from it. In a more quiet moment, this humane feeling might have left him, and he might have again become the slave of his accepted duty. But the germ of a truly noble disposition lay within him, though it was buried in sophistry; and he replied gently,

"Our meeting should not have been thus, and I warn you not to let this spirit be seen; for your nobleness of mind is feared, and, if it were known, you would never be able to leave these walls. Be not so alarmed," said he, softening still more, for he read her terror in the pale face of the noble being: "you shall not have trusted to me in vain. Whilst absent, I can serve you; and I will do so, if you solemnly promise to restrain your bold spirit, to behave prudently, and to avoid those contradictions which may draw angry attention towards you. Then, perhaps, they may think of your freedom, if I give testimony of your want of ability. Yet, enough," added he, evidently vexed: "sympathy makes me talk idly, and I hope you will not misunderstand me. I respect every plan of my superiors, and I warn you to be patient and obedient."

"Oh! do not repent what your humane heart prompted you to say, noble man," cried Mary tenderly. "You have said enough. I cannot see the reason of this proceeding, nor its aim, and will, by God's help, guard myself, though I have never learned deceit, but have ever despised it. I will pray to God to enable me to avoid the enemy, for freedom is sweet, and beyond these walls lie so many hopes! Oh, assist me to attain them; and, believe me, this

lovely world, which was God's creation, is not sinful, and that sin alone separates us from God's image."

Tears flowed over the priest's hand, which Mary held; and so fervently did she speak, that it seemed as if she had tried the work of conversion upon him, and had made greater progress than was compatible with his calling; for although his eyes were fixed on the ground, his expressive features showed his deep emotion.

"So let us part," said he, mildly. "God protect you!"

Mary gently bowed her head, and he touched it for a moment, blessing her. He slowly left the room, and Mary was left not so inconsolable as he had found her, for there was a ray of hope in her heart, to which returned the confidence and strength of youth, and courage to meet adversity.

CHAPTER XXIII.

When Mary awoke on the following morning, her first thought was that Father Clement was far from the castle, and that she was left alone, with what appeared so strange and fearful to her. For a moment her courage failed; but the sound sleep of youth had not refreshed the body in vain, and the soul was also strengthened.

On entering the outer room, in which Miklas had placed her breakfast, Mary received from him a ceremonious invitation to be introduced to the lady of the castle.

"I am ready," replied she, with a slight change of colour. "Tell your lady that I will wait on her at any hour she will appoint, for I know little of the rules of the house."

"Her grace needs a long morning rest," said the old servant, looking upon the ground. "Sister Eleeta will call you when her ladyship is ready."

After breakfast, Mary looked at the books which her little library contained, and this examination renewed the uneasy feeling that efforts were to be made, in every way, to give that direction to her

mind which alone was permitted in this house. A little edition of the Italian Homer was hidden behind other books, apparently a deviation from the prescribed place which Father Clement allowed. This rejoiced her the more, as she fancied it a token of his good wishes towards her, the only hope she had for the future.

She was interrupted by Sister Electa, whom, remembering the advice of Father Clement, she received with her natural graciousness. Under the same influence she endeavoured to give her dress a graver appearance, which, being mourning, was easily done. She took off her jewels, and concealed her curls under a black velvet cap, which, although quite in accordance with the ruling fashion, gave her costume a simple and grave appearance. Whilst making these arrangements, she tried to gain courage, and to overcome the dread produced by the past occurrences. She resolved to be extremely prudent in her manner, and to watch narrowly all which should transpire in her presence.

Her grave companion conducted her into the entrance-hall, where a wide, ornamented oak staircase led to the upper rooms. The dark wall was hung with pictures, but imperfectly to be seen by the light, sparingly admitted through coloured windows, affording no view of the country around. At the top of the staircase was a curtain of tapestry, which, having been drawn back by a servant, admitted Mary and the sister into a large hall. The damp and dust of this room showed disuse; but on one side was a suite of rooms, hung with velvet and tapestry, and containing pictures from sacred history and the legends of the saints, all well executed. As they approached the last door, Sister Electa, whose rapid progress had left Mary little time to observe the rooms through which she had passed, whispered gently, that the person whom they were about to visit was styled "venerable lady."

Mary now entered a small dark space, from which a narrow winding staircase led to the rooms above. She at once recollected Margaret's tale of the staircase where the unhappy lord of this castle had died, and the little pointed door, by which they entered, with its wide threshold and deep niches, appeared to have been the death-bed of the unhappy one whom his wife in vain sought to

awaken. Mary paused for a moment, shuddering, while Electa murmured a short prayer, crossed herself, and sprinkled the spot with holy water from a vessel which stood by the door. Mary followed her mechanically through a dark sleeping-room, with melancholy-looking furniture, to a large vaulted room, in which burned a clear fire. Daylight dimly penetrated through the narrow gothic windows, and the dark walls were hung with miserable pictures of martyr legends, in still darker frames. At first Mary could not distinguish these; for the sudden transition from the dark sleeping-room to the glare of a large fire, however its light might be lessened by the oaken walls and floor, almost made her blind. When she recovered, she saw, besides the horrible pictures of martyrs, an altar with a prayer-stool and seats, behind which was a painting of the Saviour.

Electa now desired her to come forward; and seated in deep shadow, near the fire, she beheld a female, who, with a hollow dry voice, invited her to approach. Neither the voice, nor the grief-worn appearance of this person, agreed with Mary's recollection of the terrible apparition; for she was attired in a handsome nun's dress, of the most costly material, and which left visible only her hard yellow face, and her shrivelled hands, in which she held a rosary.

Mary, who waited to be addressed, found herself exposed to the sharp scrutinizing gaze of the dark figure, without any regard to hospitality. She felt the insult, but far from withdrawing her eyes from this personage, she experienced a kind of fascination or dread, obliging her to watch her movements in order to protect herself. Suddenly a smile of contempt passed over the lifeless face of the lady, and slightly turning herself to a person who sat behind her chair, and of whom the head alone was visible, she said,

"She has the same vain beauty which I supposed her to possess, and which confirms her presence as much as the assurances of interested persons. A good task, if the talent of her grandmother has descended to her; and you may collect together all your wisdom, for not all the strong castles of Scotland and England were formerly sufficient to protect what that becoming cap covers."

A short hoarse laugh succeeded this incomprehensible speech.

"We trust not to worldly means," answered the person addressed, "but to the influence and intercession of our blessed Virgin, who takes care of the erring of her sex, as your humility knows."

The lady turned rather angrily from the speaker, whilst her hands touched the cross and beads of her rosary, as she replied, carelessly,

"It is so, reverend sir. The saints have this in their hands; and whoever knows this race as I do, must hope that they will unite to destroy it."

As she said this, a wild fire gleamed in her eyes, and she threw a fiery glance upon Mary, as, addressing her, she continued:

"It is not my choice that you are here, for this house enjoys a sanctification which ought not to be injured by profane visits. But they assure me that you will soon abjure your errors, through the influence of our holy church, and I will not refuse my aid in so meritorious a work. I sent for you to give you permission to appear among us, in order that through what you will here see, your mind may be brought to reconcile yourself with your conscience."

During this unfriendly address, Mary endeavoured to restrain her insulted feelings; but her cheeks glowed, and her eyes were filled with tears, as she answered, in an agitated voice,

"However I came here, and however little my free will has been concerned in my seeking or avoiding your house, if you have reasons for aiding the plans of those who led me here, blame me not if I am burdensome. I will not requite your hospitality by annoying behaviour, and whilst I am obliged to remain, I will respect what others deem worthy of respect, although my education has taught me different opinions."

"You have, at least, too many words. Long answers are always unbecoming, where obedience alone is desired; and I do not require your assurance, as understood by yourself, that you will make no opposition. I find myself, reverend sir," continued she, turning round, and with the same cold and contemptuous tone, "simply from respect to the higher knowledge in this affair possessed by yourself and

Father Clement, obliged to grant a privilege to this young and haughty girl, which will only nourish the vain worldly thoughts with which her head is evidently filled. But I must limit the period of this indulgence."

"The rules which we must both obey cannot be disregarded," answered the person addressed; "and the highest female servant of the holy persecuted church will not, in her position, doubt as to these rules."

The features of the lady indicated the violent struggle with which she strove to receive with moderation this intimation of forced obedience; and it was evident that the older habit of tyrannical rule was strongly opposed to that implicit submission which always caused her extreme bitterness.

"I say nothing of the present," she replied, "but it is doubtful how much longer I shall abide by your spiritual advice. Remember, we are in the castle of the Howards!"

"Yes," interrupted the father, "and in that of the reverend abbess of the holy Ursula."

As she threw her head scornfully back, she observed Mary, who remained yet standing, and she said, vehemently and rudely,

"I will not look upon that worldly cap again: Sister Electa shall make you a proper head-dress: the rest of your attire I permit for the present. You will appear at early mass, dine in the refectory, and be present at vespers. Meanwhile, the reverend Father John will instruct you; and, in proportion to the facility with which you relinquish your errors, will you—"

"Leave the rest to me," interrupted Father John, who did not seem to approve of the latter part of this address; and perceiving that Mary, affected by this rude treatment, could scarcely support herself, he came forward, and, assisted by Electa, led her from the room. In the little sleeping-room he stopped her, saying,

"Do not be alarmed by the praiseworthy, though somewhat too violent, zeal of the worthy woman. You will not suffer from it, if you are gentle and attentive."

Mary would even now have told them that their expectations were vain, but her endeavours to bring forth more than broken and

unintelligible words, were fruitless. Father John interrupted these painful attempts by saying,

"I will see you again. Meantime, think well before you decide. You shall want neither advice nor consolation; but be careful not to make your situation here worse by resistance in trifles. Sister Electa, I trust this afflicted one to you. Go, go," said he, disappearing through the door of the room which they had left, whilst Electa led Mary back to her own apartment.

When Father John, with a grave and quiet countenance, re-entered, the angry lady gave way to her ill-temper.

"A heavy penitence is laid on us," she exclaimed: "a vacation for all who have attained sanctity in this house!"

"Though the task be difficult, it is not for you to resent it," answered the priest, in a severe tone; "for only difficult exercises can withdraw your spirit from the chains of the world, which yet strongly encircle you. But yet it is no part of your task to receive this young person, whom we bring to you, with a sternness which will render her timid, and tempt her to resistance. She must be led to confidence, and receive from us benevolent sentiments only. Thus shall we secure her attention and compliance; whilst the influence of a quiet and uniform life here is favourable to the holy design. You have been gratifying your vain heart in order to annoy this proud child of the world, and apparently have done more mischief in a few minutes, than it will be in our power to rectify. I need not remind you how you have transgressed those duties, the fulfilment of which is the only means of securing for you here the protection you require; but I warn you of the necessity of saving yourself from eternal damnation."

This bitter address had so much the tone of an anathema, that the lady was at first alarmed, and her head sunk upon her bosom; but her anger soon resumed its sway, and she vented her indignation against her confessor by look and gesture. As he proceeded, however, her rage again subsided, and that fear, which had been found the only yoke capable of restraining her, was excited by the threat which his last words contained; for her weakened mind and heavily burdened conscience were deeply susceptible of the dread of future

punishment. Without answering, she murmured the prayers of her rosary, and beat her forehead and breast with great violence. Father John walked rapidly up and down, and having prescribed repose to the lady, seemed entirely to forget her; for he strove to concentrate his thoughts upon Mary, whose future guidance had been committed to his charge. The lady had meanwhile ended her prayers, but not daring to interrupt the reflections of the priest, she was compelled to remain inactive, and her mind easily returned to those worldly thoughts which were so frequent with her, despite all the outwards forms of conventual strictness which were imposed to ensure her obedience.

The corrupt Duke of Somerset escaped the axe only through the unconquerable love of James, and this castle was given to him as a prison by the participator, or rather originator, of his crime. His Catholic wife, Lady Frances Howard, made this old possession of the Howards the fold of her church; and guided by the prudent rule of her Jesuit confessor, she took a part in all the plots which were carried on by the Catholics, still very powerful in England.

The loneliness and strength of the castle, its vicinity to the coast of France, where the all-powerful Richelieu was the firm adherent of the party, and the important possession of the banished lady, made it a place of great importance. Its owner being wholly subjected to spiritual control, interior arrangements were speedily made for the concealment of its inhabitants, and for avoidance of the world. No open road led to it; the rocks by which it was surrounded hid it from the casual wayfarer; and it could be observed from the ocean only by rounding a dangerous point, avoided by all seamen. Whilst scarcely resembling a house, the clever agents employed in the affair had here founded a convent, in which the rules of the order were maintained with a strictness rendered still more severe by the tyranny of a nearly untameable spirit in Lady Frances. A certain dignity was conferred upon her, which gratified her unbridled love of sway, without interfering with the priestly discipline necessary to subject everything to the will of those who guided the affairs of the order. She was thus made useful for the purposes of her spiritual guardians, whilst her passions were occasionally left

to her own guidance ; and though made the slave of these men by her bad conscience, she often attempted to withdraw herself from their influence by cunning arts, especially after a hollow contrition like that which Father John had just forced upon her. Breaking the silence which annoyed her, she said,

“ If the power which I ought to possess over the female inhabitants of this house be so entirely withdrawn from me, I cannot see what is to be done with her here ; and why, being already on the coast, she should not be at once taken over the sea. She could be converted in France better than here.”

“ Perhaps this may be necessary at a later period,” answered Father John. “ Meantime, we rely on your good will and worldly prudence, and mean to leave her under your influence. Her early education makes it undecided whether she will be useful to us by means of her birthright. We will not remove her entirely out of the country ; but if we can avail ourselves of her claims, remember that she can then only learn her high birth by a promise to rule the weak heart, which, shattered by the death of her mother, could remain insensible to the beautiful and illustrious Henrietta of France.”

“ And you really hope to attain this by the agency of a creature, who, besides the curse of her sex, on the one side unites the uncontrollable character of Buckingham with all the worldly vanity of her grandmother. The notorious Mary of Scotland is seen in every feature of her pretty face. Imprison her at once, and relinquish all hope of her conversion. By that course you will at least deprive the detestable Buckingham of the triumph upon which he had reckoned in her person. Take the word of a woman who has never been deceived in people, you will gain no triumph over her.”

Father John was silent for a moment, and it was clear that he had no better hope. At length he said, “ Father Clement praised the goodness of her heart, and her simple obedience to the will of her seniors. Upon this we proposed to work, and therefore your rough reception has operated so perversely.”

“ Ha !” cried the lady vehemently, “ must I hear sensible men

talk of kindness of heart, and resignation to the will of others? So long as the will of another flatters the wish of our heart, so long are we ready to follow it; and the sorrows of others awaken our sympathy only whilst we vainly seek it for our own. Youth gives this appearance of resignation, which melts away as soon as the awakened wishes of the heart lend impulse to the will. The same good heart which now deceives you with its emptiness, then aids the passions, and is compliant to no other will; whilst the good heart rages on, careless what wreck it makes. Frances Howard has not lived in vain. Formerly, she was called a good, gentle child; but the old weak-headed king would unite the families of Essex and Howard, and they took away the doll from me, and the wooden sword from Essex, in order to forge the chains which were to bind our hands in marriage. But when Frances saw the handsome Seymour, then no one praised her soft heart; for she had found a will, and uncontrolled wishes made her scorn the will of others. Oh! early, very early, did I learn what goodness is, and I despise the hypocrite who pretends to that which the first breath of passion destroys. "Take care," she continued, not permitting Father John to finish a sentence he had begun concerning penance—"Take care! for how long will her compliance last, if you hinder her return to that world for which every pulse of her silly heart beats?"

"Therefore," said Father John, "the resistance must be so imperceptible, that she must not find herself obliged to struggle, and her strength will soon disappear in a life of vacuity."

A short repulsive laugh denoted the estimation in which the lady held these words; but Father John, without seeming to notice it, continued:—

"Our next tidings will announce the death of the king, and the arrival of the new queen. Then will begin the storm. The queen will require our influence, for she even now mistrusts the strength of her holy faith; and then comes the question, whether she will possess Charles's heart. He has two passions—the love of self-control, and grief for the loss of his first beloved one, and the only child of their marriage. If Charles do not love his queen, then is the great throw to be risked; which is—to send his daughter as a

present to the queen. Whoever brings the girl to him, will have a powerful claim upon his love, and the queen will have the opportunity of displaying a generosity for which he must be grateful."

"And the daughter?" interrupted the lady. "She will play a contrary game to the Catholic wife. Buckingham will keep his worldly-minded niece in his interest, and find in her a fresh support for his boundless power."

"In order to decide that, we must look higher than you have yet done. This maiden will not join the vicious Buckingham against her father."

"But," she interrupted, "the heretic will endeavour to secure her father against the Catholic queen."

"This is possible, and remains to be seen. Therefore she must be kept here, and subjected to trials which will decide every doubt respecting it."

"Good, good—I wish you success. But the world is the great magnet, which draws the hidden ore out of the pit of the heart, and this magnet only has power to hold it fast. Besides, are you so sure that she will remain concealed here? Do you not fear the power of the worthy Buckingham, nor that of the Nottinghams, who, with the crafty Archibald at their head, can do much if they will?"

"If they will!" repeated the reverend man with emphasis, and smiling contemptuously. "But they will not. Do you not know the mistake which troubles the proud spirit of the duchess, and which has prevented her proclaiming the flight of this young lady, as she otherwise would have done? She has strenuously opposed every inquiry; but the evasion by which she endeavours to keep from the world a secret which would hurt her pride, fills her conscience with perpetual reproaches. She believes herself compelled to repay this creature for the supposed sin of her husband, and, in order to prevent any effective pursuit, she has desired Archibald to restrain her son from attempting it. Of course she believes her morally lost, after having been so long in Mowbrake's hands, and this thought still more effectually precludes any wish to find her again."

"In that I rejoice from my heart," answered the lady with pleasure. "Let the hypocrites ensnare themselves in their own nets: they like to be thought better than others, that they may look down upon us. It is all the same; but the one is corrected before the world, and the other in his weak heart. Can anything be more strange than that this maiden, upon whose head rests an invisible diadem, and who was kept concealed by all the means that craftiness could devise, should now be driven out of all human society, to those who, because of her face, are her natural enemies, and who so arrange all her concerns, that the highest punishment to her noble heart is prepared for her?"

"This event, so little to be foreseen, is certainly surprising," said the father. "This child was always important to us, and our views of the whole secret have often changed. It would have been an excellent plea for hindering the Spanish union, that Charles was married, and the proofs existing. Certainly this was a last resource, since it would also have made the union difficult with Henrietta of France, and would probably have delayed the event until he had become king. And we cannot deny that Buckingham has aided our cause, whilst he thought he was serving himself alone by our instrumentality. Had the prince not gone on this stupid journey, we should probably not have had the maiden in our power, though we should have learned her situation through Porter. It was fortunate, also, that Lord Nottingham died at Madrid, instead of near his wife, whose doubts he would have solved, and thus led to a discovery unwelcome to us, and which would have enabled the prince to regain her. We did not approve of her residence with that family, although it was hardly to be supposed that Buckingham would seek her there; and the cardinal insisted that we should take that trouble, when the mother's death made her the important person. Next to the secret clause in the marriage contract, the most necessary part of Mazarin's embassy was to take her away with him; for the crafty statesman already feared the influence of Buckingham over the prince, and would not risk its increase through her means. At last he abandoned this plan, for we apprised him that the duke had found her, and had devised a plan for his friend Membroke, which,

however, would lead to her being delivered into our hands. The duke's ciphers being known to us all through Maxwell, we had merely to hunt about for that silly fool Membroke, until we could quietly withdraw her from his power."

"All is right thus far," said Lady Somerset, "but you play a hazardous game. Here are weighty interests to be adjusted through a woman, who, young, of rare beauty, and high birth, will certainly cast from her all to which you have led her here, as soon as she is conscious of her advantages in the world, if it appear to oppose her career. Where then will your power be?"

"It would be possible," said Father John, with icy coldness, "to render her as harmless in the midst of the world as in these walls; and as regards the power which she is destined to wield, another is raised up against Buckingham, which would be supported by her. King James will be reconciled to Bristol, who will be raised to an important post by the influence of the French court. The maiden is involved with his interests; for Father Clement informed me that she had unconsciously betrayed to him an attachment to Bristol's grandson, which must be fostered if she returns to the world, as thereby Buckingham's niece would be a member of his enemy's family."

"The plan is good; but my advice is—imprison her, destroy her; then you have the advantage safe. And Charles? I do not know these Stuarts, if I suppose that love's wound, or the grief of a father for those who are gone, will be any obstacle to the power of the blooming wife, whose beauty you praise so highly. But," continued the lady, "tell me one thing more. Are you sure that Charles was married to this Lady Buckingham? Are there documents? Can we hope for no shame to Buckingham's proud heart through this daughter?"

"The prince was married to her before he had any prospect of becoming Prince of Wales," answered the priest. "Both were very young, yet the passionate Charles would have the certificate of this marriage, of which the Earl and Countess of Mar were the witnesses. The chaplain, Master Brixton, performed the ceremony; and there are two documents, one in the possession of Buckingham,

and the other preserved by the late Duke of Nottingham behind the picture of Lady Buckingham, which, during a residence in London, the prince ordered to be placed in the well-concealed niche of the bed-room, and of whose existence no one but the Duke of Nottingham could be aware."

"But how could Nottingham love her so violently, when he must have known that she was the wife of the prince before she came to London?"

"He learned this only after the death of Prince Henry, when the prince, being ill, sent the duke to his anxious wife, assuring her, even in this exaltation, of his entire affection; for he was resolved to raise her to the throne, and thus was the secret revealed to this friend."

"That was a good commission," said the lady, laughing; "and then was the forsaken daughter of Bristol quickly chosen as his bride. But whether this be a lawful daughter or not, destroy her, and all that bears the name of Stuart or Buckingham; for then only are you certain of success."

Saying this, the lady arose, and proceeded to her oratory, in order to spend the rest of the morning in the prescribed devotions, which, despite their frequency, had but little effect upon her mind.

The time which now succeeded was intended to bow the mind of the unhappy Mary, and to sink it in gloom and heaviness. After a meeting with Father John, in which she did not fail to defend her creed, she was obliged to follow the directions of this man, and join in the ceremonies of the house. The father saw that the perverse spirit of the lady would not allow her to act with him, and this he told Mary, who rejoiced at the circumstance.

During the hours which she did not spend with the lady, or in the working hall with the other sisters, her only amusement was the childish talk of Margaret, or the bigoted conversation of Sister Eleata. These hours were far from being pleasant ones; for if the worship on which she was obliged to attend was not in accordance with her feelings, it was not difficult to lead her mind in such a manner as to strengthen it against what displeased her. But at

other times she was, for hours together, annoyed by the most fatiguing gossip. Exaggerated descriptions of martyr sufferings, of saints' miracles, and of wonderful relics, were distorted by the bigotry which credited them, till she could scarcely bear to listen; and there remained for her only to turn her thoughts upon her employment, which consisted principally in preparing the coarse gray dresses and the knitted sandals worn by the nuns.

It did not escape her, however, that the castle contained other persons besides the nuns. The dinner hour brought strangers to the refectory, spiritual partakers, by whom she saw herself watched, and who even visited her in her own room, although they never showed themselves elsewhere. Lady Somerset, as prioress, usually occupied the chair which covered the secret entrance to the underground church, now become familiar to Mary by her daily attendance; but in the presence of these strangers she relinquished it. The visits of these persons, and the consequential manner of Father John, left no doubt that they intended not only to convert Mary, but to make her a participator in the plans of the order towards a certain hidden end. At first, she endeavoured to maintain a quiet, unpretending demeanour, according to the advice of Father Clement, leaving them to suppose her actual conversion; but when, believing this, they began to entrust her with more secret communications, her noble and pure heart rebelled at the deceit. She now spoke more decidedly; but this only redoubled the exertions of those around her, and a painful scene ensued, terminating with their requiring an oath from her never to reveal the mysteries of the castle. After a long refusal she complied, not supposing that they respected anything worse than the fanaticism of individuals, and well knowing that her refusal would destroy every hope of her ultimate escape from the house.

Her companionship with the lady of the castle was repugnant and oppressive to her mind. The terrible scene of the first night had not been repeated, though unaccountable sounds were often heard, and had once, through Margaret's carelessness, penetrated to the door of her sleeping room. But the fearful impression still

remained. The lady's acuteness and clearness of understanding seemed to withstand these paroxysms; and her learned companions were often astonished by her superior penetration and experience, to which they must have yielded, had they not belonged to that class famed for its worldly prudence and deep cunning, the order of Jesuits. Her former life was unknown to Mary, but the latter saw plainly the torment of a conscience destroyed by sin, and obduracy of feeling. She also beheld with astonishment, how this proud woman was overawed by the threatened curse of the church, whenever she offered resistance to its will; and how submissively she yielded to the commands of the priest, even while her understanding rebelled against him.

We must here relate certain circumstances with which our young heroine was unacquainted.

The Lady Frances Howard, when only fourteen, was betrothed to the Earl of Essex, in obedience to the will of King James, whose favourite scheme was to unite these two families, to whom he considered himself equally indebted. The young earl was immediately sent to Italy, in order to complete his education. Lady Frances, meanwhile, became celebrated for her extreme beauty, and, as maid of honour to the queen, she had daily opportunities of intercourse with the favourite, whom James had raised from the lowest rank, and at last created Duke of Somerset. This intercourse gave rise to an attachment between them, and they flattered themselves that James would readily yield to the wishes of his favourite, and absolve Lady Frances from the tie which bound her to the young earl. Both were therefore much astonished to meet with a firm refusal from the king; and the duke had recourse to the chancellor, Sir Thomas Overbury, who had originally introduced him to James, and to whom he had entrusted the secret of his attachment. But the king insisted that Lady Frances should fulfil her vows to Essex, who had now returned from the continent, and was still attached to his young bride; and enraged by her obstinate opposition, he banished her from court.

Sir Thomas Overbury not only pleaded her cause with James, but assisted the lovers in carrying on a secret correspondence. He

had warned them, however, not to attempt to see one another ; but in spite of this they contrived to do so, and the ceremony of marriage was solemnized between them. This so exasperated their benefactor, that he disclosed the whole affair to the king, and the Duke and Duchess of Somerset were immediately lodged in the Tower. Here, shut out from that dissipation which was necessary to her happiness, the faults of Lady Somerset's character became vices, and she swore eternal hatred against him who had so lately been her benefactor. She sent her mother to the king, accusing Overbury of various practices, and also of defrauding the royal treasury of a sum which had been abstracted by the lady's own agents. Overbury acknowledged that he had deserved the king's anger by the countenance he had given to the lovers, but he denied all share in the accomplishment of their marriage. These assertions were, however, disbelieved, for Lady Frances persisted in his guilt, and Overbury was led to the Tower on the same day that the duke and duchess were released.

Meanwhile a new favourite, the haughty Villiers, had appeared at court ; and the duchess, irritated by finding her husband's place already occupied, strove in vain to regain for him his former position. Thus a continual strife was carried on between them. Buckingham, in revenge, examined the charges against Overbury, and found that he had not been guilty of the crime of which Lady Somerset had accused him ; whilst James began to be satisfied that he had acted too hastily. This haughty woman now displayed the full malice of her character. Overbury was one morning found dead in the Tower, and public rumour pointed out the duchess as the instigator of this tragedy. At the same time, accident brought to light the papers which had been concealed by her order, and Overbury's innocence was fully proved.

The duke and duchess were again imprisoned in the gloomy fortress, and the House of Lords declared the lives of both to be forfeited. James long delayed acknowledging the justice of this sentence. The affair had begun to fade from the minds of the people, and it was doubtful whether the two unhappy criminals had suffered in private the punishment due to their crimes, or whether

they still lived in strict confinement. But James's ministers, finding him unwilling to condemn any member of the family of Howard to so fearful a death, had advised him to banish the guilty pair to a castle on the eastern coast of England, where they lived a prey to vindictive feelings.

For some time, the king sent commissioners to visit the castle, in order that he might be assured of their presence there. But after the death of the unhappy duke, whose madness had been brought on by the ill-treatment, which he received from his wife, it was not considered necessary to repeat these domiciliary visits so frequently ; and at last a monthly declaration that she was still there, signed by herself, was deemed satisfactory. Thus the rumours which were circulated, in spite of all the precaution employed to suppress them, were unnoticed by any high authority.

Such is the history of that fearful woman in whose company we left our young heroine : and we must now revert to circumstances of a different nature, but which, nevertheless, influenced her fate.

CHAPTER XXIV.

We will now return to the Lords Ormond and Richmond, whom we left sorrowfully watching the litter which contained Lady Mary. They both felt assured that she accompanied Membroke with her own consent, but as she had declared that she had not eloped with him, they could not but believe her the victim of some delusion, which, for reasons known only to herself, must remain a secret. During their return to the castle, they formed a thousand plans, and hazarded a thousand conjectures, but the principal question could not be decided—what was to be done under these circumstances ? She certainly had an indisputed right to act as she pleased, and the remembrance of this ought to set limits to the unquiries of her friends ; and Lord Ormond and his friend would have thus been

reconciled to her conduct, had they not felt that a man of Lord Membroke's character could have none but bad intentions towards her, and that he must have used the basest deception to obtain her consent. They also conjectured that she might have been induced to give him her confidence by finding that the Nottingham family had been unsuccessful in their inquiries respecting her relations, and that she hoped, by giving these efforts another direction, to meet with him for whom she longed.

The discovery of her flight had so agitated the two duchesses, that the gentlemen were filled with anxiety at the idea of returning to them without being able to give any good tidings. But both found circumstances changed at the castle. The younger duchess repelled all explanations, by the coldness with which she treated the affair, and no trace was left of the violent emotion which she had displayed on receiving the first intelligence.

"We have fulfilled the duties of humanity and hospitality towards this young person," said she, in answer to the information which her son gave her, "and we are exonerated from all blame by the mystery in which she has thought fit to envelope all. I, who showed her the affection of a mother, am the only person who has reason to feel grieved by this deceit; but I resign this feeling, and also any further protection of her, for I perceive that, in spite of my affection, she would persist in guiding her own fate. I thank you, Lord Ormond, and you, my son, for your readiness to fulfil my first hasty wishes. The affair is now at an end; but in case I should ever again require assistance, I will have recourse to you, whose services I prefer before all others. You are doubtless anxious to convey this intelligence to your grandmother. Go, then, to her. My journey to Godway Castle is fixed for to-morrow, and I hope for your company, my son. In truth, we have more important affairs to attend to, than the follies of a strange girl."

The lady left the room without waiting for a reply, and the two friends repaired to the elder duchess, who, without evincing any coldness, for she was always ready to offer sympathy for others, gently referred them to her daughter-in-law. The gentlemen separated with the unpleasant conviction that an unfavourable dis-

cussion of the affair had taken place between the ladies during their absence, and that thence arose the coldness of the duchess, and the refusal of any further advice from her mother-in-law. But whatever might be Richmond's feelings regarding the Lady Melville, he resolved for the present to dismiss her from his mind, as he felt that his grandfather's situation, which he understood better than his mother, peremptorily demanded his undivided attention.

In a short time the family were again assembled at Godway Castle, and the old duchess had left Barton-hall in order to pass some time with her daughter-in-law. The season was too far advanced to allow of any other place of family meeting than the comfortable fireside. The north wind howled through the bare trees; all outdoor amusement was at an end; and the usual order reigned throughout the house, undisturbed by any deviation from the customs which their rank imposed upon them. It was a heavy time for the family of Nottingham. The anxiety respecting the Earl of Bristol's affairs, added to the remembrance of the insult so lately offered to them, prevented each individual of the party from making any strenuous attempts to regain their lost composure. They knew that all England felt the affront which was offered to the earl, and shared in the grief of his family; but all minds are not able to find consolation in the sympathy of the many, and the proud heart of the duchess resisted her father's misfortunes with displeasure.

Lord Bristol was banished from London. The request which he made, that the parliament should judge between him and his accusers, was too dangerous in its character to receive the assent of Beakingham; and he extorted from the king an order for his banishment, which he thought would negative all the attempts of his family towards his justification. Bristol had no power to resist this command. The favour of his king was withdrawn from him, and the Prince of Wales appeared to share the opinion of the audacious duke. The earl was therefore compelled to quit London, and to deem himself happy that he was allowed the castle of the Dukes of Nottingham as a place of refuge.

Lord Archibald and Lord Richmond were therefore left alone to

maintain the proofs of his innocence; but the opposition which they met with, and the hindrance which Buckingham's creatures threw in their way, rendered their efforts as vain as were those of the Danaids, to fill their pails with water. These exertions also drew upon them the displeasure of the court, which did not like to be thus reminded of an affair that could not be justified, and which could not be left to die away quietly, because of the importance of the parties concerned. The king's ministers, although convinced of the earl's innocence, dared not oppose Buckingham's influence over the monarch; and Lord Salisbury had sedulously avoided any display of sympathy with a family suffering under his king's displeasure.

Thus it happened that the man, who a short time previous had been in high consideration at two great courts, and had been distinguished by the friendship of the English and Spanish monarchs—who had been on the point of concluding a brilliant alliance for the heir to his country's throne, and thus securing the blessings of the people and the thanks of his king—this man was now accused of betraying his country; accused, too, before all England, even before all Europe, through the influence of an insolent and thoughtless favourite, and condemned to a silence and banishment, which not only precluded all attempts to justify him, but also cast a stain on this once highly-honoured name.

The conduct of the prince was marked by a coldness which only too plainly justified the assertion of his friends, that his character had undergone a complete change since his journey to Spain—a change which was everywhere attributed to the influence of Buckingham. No attention was paid by him to the petitions of Bristol's family, and King James was too well guarded to allow of their reaching his ear. The King of Spain, Bristol's unwearied friend, had, despite the inimical relation in which the two countries stood, written with his own hand a letter to King James, defending his favourite, and entreating him to give him a hearing. James never received this letter; and it was intimated to the generous Philip that his friendship for the earl did not redound to his honour, since he was accused of having favoured his catholic majesty at the expense of his own sovereign.

A like fate attended the efforts of the Electress Palatine, the beautiful and unhappy Elizabeth, who, driven from her husband's possessions, was now robbed of the hope with which she had looked forward to Bristol's influence with Spain, as the means of procuring her some assistance to regain the lost crown. In vain was she told that France would be her friend, and that she would lose nothing by this change in affairs: her patience was exhausted, and despair gave her courage to lay open the truth. Her letters to her father contained violent expressions against Buckingham, and assertions of Bristol's innocence; but these only strengthened the position of the malicious duke, by defeating the object they were meant to accomplish.

James had regarded his daughter's union with Frederick as an unhappy calamity, which had destroyed the system of peace he was so anxious to maintain, and also caused too deep inroads upon his treasury; and if he forgave his daughter, it was merely because the evil of a war had as yet been averted, in so far as England was concerned. At this moment, when his declining strength made him more heartless and ill-tempered than ever, the idea of a war with Spain so embittered him, that, deceived as to its true originator, he was much annoyed at his daughter's defence of Bristol; and this vexation was increased by that defence coming from a quarter whence he had long anticipated the evil that was now brought on by his late favourite. He therefore complained of the warnings which the Electress gave him, and it was evident that her interference only increased the difficulties of the earl's position.

But although there appeared little prospect of a favourable result, Lord Archibald and Richmond resolved to maintain a firm footing in the contested field. By keeping a strict watch upon the various changes at the court, they hoped that an opportunity might yet offer to place the affair in a clearer light. They therefore willingly remained absent from Godway Castle; whilst the young duke passed all the time that he could spare from his various duties, in the house of his now acknowledged betrothed, from whom he sought sympathy in the anxieties of his family.

In the sorrow experienced by the younger duchess for her father,

many feelings were mingled, which she was not inclined to confess to others. She had expressed herself satisfied with the termination of the Lady Melville's affair, and, with that peculiar manner which prevents opposition, had prohibited all inquiries concerning her present abode. The name of this lovely and amiable creature was therefore now never heard in the circle which had formerly been enlivened by her presence, or was only mentioned by the servants, who had all been attached to her.

Lord Bristol had taken possession of the apartments which we formerly mentioned as having been occupied by the late duke, and his restless mind was busied in drawing up memorials relating to his diplomatic life; but whilst sunk in contemplation of the past, he never lost sight of his present situation, and his most anxious wish was to obtain access to his king, and thus have an opportunity to justify himself. To his daughter only did he confide this wish, and, listening to his plans, she now occupied the seat she had so often filled during the lifetime of her husband, gazing on the furrowed countenance and blanched head of him whom she so tenderly loved.

"I require not to defend my name to my countrymen," said he, "but my heart longs for a vindication with one who must hear it soon, or it may be too late. My beloved but misguided king is near the end of his days; and shall he close his eyes without being reconciled to me, his former friend, and ever faithful servant?"

The earl rose, and walked thoughtfully up and down the room. The duchess regarded him in silence. She was conscious that the personal distrust of that monarch, whom her father had loved with a devotion bordering on enthusiasm, had pierced his heart more deeply than the public accusation, which nobody believed to be true, although it was impossible to refute it; and as she anxiously reflected upon the various means to be adopted for procuring the ardently desired reconciliation, her eyes became brighter, and her melancholy features regained a great portion of their former lively expression.

"Well now, dear father, let us act," said she at last, and stepping quickly before him: "the widow of the Duke of Nottingham

is not, at all events, banished from court, and she will not be denied access to the foot of the throne. Let your daughter hasten to London as your messenger, and these tottering knees shall bend to implore justice for her father. James will assuredly listen to the daughter who speaks to him from her father's heart. I do not fear this Buckingham: you know," added she, proudly, "that I never have feared him; and my mission is a mission of peace. Let England remain ignorant whether James be reconciled with his servant; but let me know that he is so, and the heavy grief will be lifted from my heart."

Bristol looked at his daughter: a gentle expression stole over his troubled features, and he extended his arms to embrace her.

"I thank you, Arabella," said he, "for the warm sympathy which you feel for me, but perhaps I may not require your assistance. This desired meeting is not, I think, very far distant, and I intended to inform you of the probability of my absence for a short time, and also of the offer I have received of an introduction to the king, which I leave to your prudence to explain to the inhabitants of the castle."

"And have I so little claim upon your confidence, honoured sir, that I am deemed unworthy, until now, of being made acquainted with plans which you have formed with strangers?" said the duchess, returning to her seat.

"Yes, strangers!" sighed the earl; "for, in England, hearts no longer beat in unison with honour. The aid upon which I rely comes from those who see their own plans prosper through the downfall of mine. Richelieu offers himself as mediator, and through his influence I shall at last see my king."

"Richelieu!" exclaimed the duchess, forgetting her vexation in her surprise: "Richelieu! the Jesuit—the enemy of all freedom, of all virtue; your enemy, too, so long as you strove to unite England with Spain. Would he seek to raise your influence, after he has profited by your fall!—he, who enters into that alliance with Buckingham, by which all that you have been striving to accomplish, is rendered void. Father, you make me believe that he deserves the reputation he has acquired, of being the most crafty statesman

in Europe. He only means to deceive you, as he has done all others."

"It was because I knew you to be so hasty in judgment," said Lord Bristol, "that I did not tell you this before. But I think I can convince you that your father, who has become gray in the path of politics, will not now fall into the snare of a French cardinal."

The duchess did not interrupt him, and he continued:

"All that I have done towards the union of England with Spain is irrevocably destroyed. France regarded this alliance with an envious eye, because it would give England an overwhelming preponderance in European affairs; and knowing, as they did, with whom this plan originated, and by whom it was carried out, I became the victim of their secret machinations. All the difficulties which the Papal court threw in our way were instigated by France, and were frustrated only by the friendship which existed between Philip and myself, which gave my counsels more weight than all the intrigues of the wily French cardinal. The reconciliation of the prince with Buckingham, followed by their journey to Spain, favoured the views of France, even beyond its hopes, and it quickly took advantage of that which it was not in my power to prevent. Alas! a cap and bells has often accomplished that which prudence attempted in vain. This alliance, which Richelieu, supported by the power of the court of Rome, could not prevent, was broken off by the crazy haughtiness of a malicious fool, who, in a silly mood, betted his shoe-buckles against it. Then Buckingham came forward, without disguising his evil designs, and unscrupulous in the use of any means which could lead to their fulfilment, he broke down that on which all rested—faith in the morals and honesty of England."

"And the prince?" inquired the duchess. "I have in vain attempted to solve the enigma of his character. I never had a high opinion of him, but now he has shown himself to be destitute of dignity, kindness, or honourable feeling. How could he make that man his friend who had raised his hand against him? How could he turn away from all whom he had formerly loved?"

"The prince is certainly very different from what we expected; but before I can agree in your opinion respecting him, I must watch

him more closely. I do not impute this change to an alteration in his disposition: there is some secret feeling, at which I have not yet been able to arrive. One thing only is certain, that since he lost his good angel, your beloved husband, he has been in the power of a wicked spirit, which, towards the world at least, has warped all his actions. Perhaps we should discover the key to all this, had I been able to learn the true motive of your husband's journey to Spain; but that it was instigated by the prince is the only point that appears clear to me."

"It is strange," said the duchess, gloomily: "the prince seemed to grudge me my husband from the first moment: he deprived me of his company through life, and he has robbed me of him for ever."

Bristol was unwilling to sharpen these accusations by contradicting them; he therefore led the conversation back to the subject first started.

"France," said he, "has at last attained its object—the substitution of the Princess Henrietta for the Infanta; but the court now regards with suspicion those whose crazy zeal furthered his plans. The princess will act as Richelieu's ambassador: her influence over the prince must be uncontested and assured; and already every wheel is put into motion to overthrow the haughty Buckingham, or, at least, to give him a counterpoise. Richelieu's plan, therefore, is to unite me with the interests of the princess, through her to reconcile me to the court, and thus to oppose the duke."

"Pardon me," said the duchess, coldly, "if I do not understand you. You have taught me that it is not right to seek happiness and favour by any other means than those of truth and sincerity. I did not expect to see you regain, through Richelieu's craftiness, that position of which you have been robbed by injustice. Certainly, the simple prayer of a daughter, for justice to her father, would affront the proud cardinal, who is now glorying in seeing his schemes on the eve of their accomplishment."

"Arabella," said the earl, looking with a smile at the dignified form of his daughter, "you are the same now as when, at Digby Castle, you menaced your father, if he ventured to recommend any

alteration in your childish plans to rule the world. You were brought up without being controlled ; you have never been subjected to restraint, and your will is become a law to yourself, and to all around you."

" Oh, father," said the duchess, " it is not kind to censure those who, weary of grief and deceit, choose the simple right as their rule of action."

" I do not chide, still less am I angry with you, my child ; but guard yourself against mistaking, for a love of what is right, that wounded pride which prompted your words. Those minds which desire to act correctly, should be careful to examine whether they can decide between right and wrong. When I grasp the hand which is offered to me, can any one doubt, and you before all, that I do it with higher views ? The enemy of my country stands at the foot of the throne, and the prince is lost if he remain in Buckingham's hands. I have now no power to break the chains which surround him. Richelieu therefore does this. I have never deceived him : he knows that my life has been entirely free from selfishness. He talks of love for England—I feel it. We use the same language towards each other : he uses that which he thinks will deceive me ; I speak from the conviction which lies in my heart. To reconcile me with the king is beyond his power, and he thinks me contemptible for desiring the favour of a silly old man ; yet to effect this is my first aim, and I expect every hour to be called to London for that purpose."

In the evening of the same day, a little troop of armed men waited on the steps which led to the terrace ; a door in the Italian wing opened ; a tall figure, wrapped in a large mantle, glided out, and descended the steps ; and soon the noise of retreating horses was heard. The next morning the duchess announced to all at table that the Earl of Bristol was gone for some days to Digby Castle, and her cold haughty manner made it evident to all that she did not wish any further remarks to be made on the subject.

CHAPTER XXV.

Once again the old palace of Whitehall was animated by the splendour and brilliancy of a court ceremony. Buckingham had won the consent of the dying king to his plan of being publicly declared ambassador from the Prince of Wales to Henrietta of France. The vanity of the duke was strongly excited : he longed to witness the jealousy of the other noblemen ; and he almost wished to recal Lord Bristol from his banishment, in order that he also might be a spectator of his brilliant triumph.

Buckingham's house resembled a market, to which everything that is beautiful and costly is brought, and the different tradespeople were all waiting to receive that nod which denoted approbation of their goods. To-day, however, he hastened along to his own apartments, without giving the slightest heed to the assemblage that bordered his way. The spacious hall was converted into a packing-room, and the floor was strewed with rare articles of all kinds, which he intended to carry with him in order to make a brilliant appearance in Paris.

To-day, Maxwell was the only person to whom Buckingham would give his attention. He made his appearance, laden with stuffs, embroidered in gold and silver, and with the most splendid jewels, and would not be repulsed until his master had made his choice. One person, however, now alone occupied Buckingham's thoughts, even beguiling him from the contemplation of his journey. This was Lord Membroke. For a long time past the duke had expected either to see him, or to receive some intelligence of the success of his scheme ; and he had lately sent messengers to the house which had been prepared for his niece's reception ; but they returned with the information that the lady was still expected, and that no tidings had been heard of Lord Membroke.

Buckingham would not have doubted of his having eloped with the Lady Mary, had he not thoroughly understood Membroke's

character ; for he knew him too well to suppose that any love affair, however romantic, could detain him from his side at the moment when a journey so well calculated to give full scope to his vanity, was about to take place. The duke was, for once in his life, obliged to be patient ; but not a day passed without some little trifle at his toilet reminding him of the earl's absence, and causing him to give vent to expressions of the most vehement wrath.

It was on the morning of the day previous to that on which the levée was to take place, that the door of the duke's cabinet opened, and Membroke's graceful figure stood before him. Maxwell, who was present, gazed with astonishment when he beheld his master fly into the earl's arms, while he congratulated him on the good fortune of having arrived in time for that audience which was to be the crowning point of his triumph, and which he now began to describe, even from the anxious face of the old king, to the jewels with which he himself was to be adorned ; ending by exhorting Membroke to render his appearance as brilliant as possible.

Whoever had observed these two men would have imagined that Buckingham was the suppliant for pardon, and Membroke the angered and insulted man ; but Maxwell, who understood his master's character, knew that he was always governed by the caprice of the moment, and that in an instant he would destroy by his carelessness the web of intrigue which he had spent perhaps years in weaving. Suddenly, as if struck by lightning, the duke exclaimed, while his face became scarlet with passion,

"Ha, my lord ! I understand why you behave so graciously to me : you fear my reception of the intelligence you have to give me. Speak directly—where is she ? Have you ventured to act contrary to my commands ? You shall fearfully lament it, if you have disobeyed me. Villain ! traitor !"

"Stay," cried Membroke, suddenly thrusting the duke on one side, "I am not inclined to be the victim of your unrestrained feelings. It is I who must receive intelligence from you. Why have you withdrawn this lady, whom I protected as an honourable man, from under my care ? Why did you permit me to wander about, expecting to hear from you ? At last I took the only means

to know your will, and came hither to receive your commands, when I find you busied in foolish preparations, which leave no thought for the business you desired me to undertake."

"No, no," said Buckingham, "it is not so. But we will cease these foolish reproaches, and now let me hear the truth. I have a misgiving that we are both betrayed; therefore an explanation is doubly necessary. Tell me, have you received any further orders from me, since my last letter to you at Burton-hall?"

"I have received your cipher three times, commanding me to give the lady into other hands, and twice appointing a place of meeting with you, whither I went, but to no purpose."

"We are betrayed!" exclaimed Buckingham. "Where are the ciphers? You have been deceived. Tell me all quickly! We must find means to unmask this trick. Who is the author? Do you think the Nottinghams did it? Yet, no: they would have delivered her by the sword: they do not know how to act by stratagem."

"They tried to tempt her away from me, but she refused to return to them."

"Did she refuse?" cried Buckingham: "had she already been entrapped by your beautiful eyes? What! did you venture to make love to her?"

"I would not have hindered my charms from operating, but I must confess that my hitherto irresistible person made no impression upon her. She treated me from the first with mistrust, and her extreme prudence led her to conduct herself, during the journey, with a cold pride, which repelled all my attempts to win her confidence.

"Quite natural," answered the duke; "your silly, vain manner roused the spirit of this phoenix, in whose veins flows the proudest blood of England. This maiden was too highly exalted above you to yield to your folly

"Fool," exclaimed Membroke; "would you give me a lecture on this subject? She is not one of those whom I can conquer by caprice and neglect, or by a look of adoration: her extreme pride makes her—I must confess it—inaccessible to every one. But if I

wished to conquer her, I must assume madness, and appear before her with blanched cheeks, and all the various signs of despair. I never knew a woman yet who could resist me then—who would not deign to bestow a look of sympathy—and who, after bestowing this look, which arises from her natural kindness of heart, did not become my property. These poor feeble creatures think themselves so weak, and us so powerful, that they yield as soon as we induce them to believe that our happiness and our life depend upon the expression of their beautiful eyes.”

“But my niece!” laughed Buckingham; “my niece! Has this man, who possesses such a complete knowledge of women, and to whom I must submit myself as a scholar—has he been able to find any mode of proceeding with the niece of the proudest duke in England? What did she say to your madness and your pale cheeks?”

Membroke tore the cloak from his shoulders, and answered in a tone of vexation,

“So much unnecessary trouble! She rated me as if I were a schoolboy, and looked at me so seldom, that it was all one whether my cheeks were white or red. If I had been insolent, she would have let the dog loose upon me; and at the least indiscretion on my part, she would have betrayed me to the Nottinghams; for her dislike of favouring me with one private word was only to be overcome by the greatest reserve on my part.”

“Capital! capital!” cried Buckingham, rubbing his hands with joy, apparently unmindful that he had hazarded the honour and virtue of his niece by giving her into the hands of this contemptible man. “But did you use force to carry her away, or did she willingly obey the commands contained in the letter?”

“Till that letter arrived,” answered Membroke, “she would not believe in my friendship for her uncle. She knew not his name; for the inquiries of the Nottingham family had led to the discovery that he was not, as she supposed, an Earl of Mar. Therefore I made use of the name of Saville, which I knew she would hear mentioned by them in connexion with the Lord Bristol’s affairs. She

was divided between mistrust of me, and the fear of betraying him whom she loved to the Nottinghams, and I alone could never have succeeded in persuading her to accompany me. The letter arrived very opportunely. She was extremely agitated at seeing it; but you had not managed it well. The handwriting was exactly like his, but the expression was different from that to which she had been accustomed. Her mind was still undecided, when the seal settled the matter. She permitted herself to be guided by me in everything, and told me afterwards that the Duchess of Nottingham had mentioned a Sir John Saville, as being the enemy of Lord Bristol. You may suppose that she was quite deceived; for when Lord Ormond and Lord Richmond followed us, she refused to accompany them back to Burton. These knights-errant retreated, threatening me, and wounded to the quick by my calm and cold behaviour. I did not go near the lady's litter the whole of that day. In the evening they told me that she was in a high fever, and I was glad to leave her to the care of the woman whose house we soon after reached. She was so ill, that I thought our journey must be delayed, and although she appeared the next morning with her eyes swollen by weeping, she was firmly resolved to proceed. That evening we reached Sir Patrick's castle, where two figures, clad in black, gave me a letter from you."

"No, no, it was not from me," cried Buckingham.

"It was in your cipher."

"What did it say?" demanded the duke.

"'Read and obey,' it began, and then it commanded me to give the lady whom I had brought to the castle into the hands of the guides whom you would send thither the next morning; adding, that I was to start directly for Rodwick House, where you required my presence."

"And you were foolish enough to do this," said Buckingham.

"How could you be so deceived as to my handwriting?"

"When do you ever write your orders with your own hand," said Membroke. "How often have I received similar foolish messages, and how often have you repeated to me, that those cyphers were to be obeyed as if the commands stood in your own

handwriting. Have not you often, in your carelessness and folly, divulged these ciphers? You must now bear the punishment; for it is certain that everything is discovered. These forged commands led me from one part of the kingdom to another, until I became weary of the whole affair, and resolved to return hither."

"Forward to Patrick!" cried Buckingham, springing from his seat. "Call Surveillant; he must start instantly, and Sir Patrick shall be brought to me, be he living or dying. All my ciphers shall be thrown into the fire, and I will make new ones. Who can have guessed this secret. We will soon know."

"Why do you not think that the Nottinghams have discovered all, and have traced us?" demanded Membroke. "Do you think they have no idea of the importance of this lady?"

"Because," answered Buckingham, "they have no skill in such matters, but confine themselves always within those limits behind which every stupid head thinks to conceal its weakness. No; they would have come in a body perhaps, and have begged an audience of me; they would have bent the knee, and said humbly, 'We had the honour of saving the life of your grace's daughter, but Lord Membroke has stolen her from us,' &c. But, believe me, they are silent, from pride, and because they are ashamed of the whole business. But now leave me. Go and attend to your toilet, in order that you may appear worthy to follow in my train. Oh! if I could but have Bristol here, to witness my triumph! for I shall receive that place, by the side of the beautiful Henrietta, which he longed for by the side of the proud Infanta."

"It is time," said Lord Membroke, indifferently, "to go to Orkney-street. Lord Marcliff is betting there on a horse-race, and I have promised to join him; and to-morrow I am going into the country with Lady Geraldine."

"And I will make an end of you," cried Buckingham, "if you do not appear as becometh one of my suite."

During these words Membroke glided out of the room; and Buckingham was much surprised, on the day of audience, to see him appear in a toilet so studied, that he concluded Lady Geraldine had been obliged to go alone to her country house. He therefore

complimented Membroke on his gallantry, and offered him a condolence on the absence of his lady-love, which was listened to with perfect indifference.

The duke, however, notwithstanding the splendour in which he appeared, was not the form on which all eyes turned. A bad fever had long separated the king from all but a chosen few of his courtiers, and his reappearance among them gave rise to a grief and sympathy, which was increased by the triumph of that haughty man whom all regarded as their sovereign's tormentor. The paleness of his face was almost ghastly, his figure was wasted, and his great weakness rendered it impossible for him to hold himself upright. He was supported by the prince; and sometimes cast his eyes mournfully around, holding out his withered hand in a manner which showed that he meant it for a greeting, and which touched those who loved him more than the most affecting words could have done.

Thus the levée, which Buckingham intended should be a triumph for himself, was a parting scene between the monarch and his friends, who loved him more now that his end was so visibly approaching. Every one present remembered some kindness received from him. His love for peace, his tolerance to the Catholics, his learning—all now redounded to his praise, and tears came into the eyes of each at the sight of his evidently increasing debility, from which even his crown could not protect him. The brilliant assembly pressed round the throne: every one wished to kiss his hand; and Buckingham, whose eyes alone were dry, saw around him only men whose hearts were touched, and who were thus rendered insensible to the envy which he had expected to excite in them. A strange event increased his annoyance, and roused his anger to the highest degree.

The French Ambassador suddenly advanced to the king, and taking his hand, whispered a few words in his ear. James motioned him back, and withdrawing his hand, thrust it into his waistcoat. At the same moment a youth advanced, and knelt down before the king.

“Lord Richmond Derbery,” exclaimed the Ambassador, and

James laid his hand, as if blessing him, upon the young man's head. The Prince of Wales immediately advanced, and the ambassador and Richmond retired.

Exasperated by the ill-success of the whole levée, and seized with forebodings of evil from the scene that he had witnessed, Buckingham hastened to the door through which the king had just disappeared, and found Richmond standing there, as if expecting him.

"Insolent fellow," cried the duke, "what have you ventured to do? By what right do you claim a share in that hour which belongs wholly to me? Justify your conduct, for I do not forget that you belong to a family which I hate and despise."

"Look around you, my lord duke," said Richmond coldly, "and you will see that this hour does not belong to you alone. King James has granted it to all his nobles, and I have received a part of it, of which you could not rob me. My conduct needs no excuse to you, at least not from one of the house of Nottingham, whose boys early become men."

"Ha, child," cried Buckingham, "can you use your sword? or has your mother sewn it into the sheath? Eh, child? answer."

"You know," said Richmond, calmly, "that the only answer which you deserve is one which the sacredness of these walls prevents my giving. But you shall have it, since you wish it, for he is a coward who entices others when he is himself invulnerable."

"Ha!" cried the duke, beside himself with rage; and both had their hands on their swords when the Prince of Wales appeared suddenly between them, and said, in a loud and firm voice,

"The king commands peace and quiet!" And already had the French ambassador removed Richmond, and Buckingham was also carried away.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The autumnal fog hung like a gray curtain over every object on the morning of the day following the levée narrated in our last chapter, when a little troop of armed men stopped before a gate leading to the north wing of the palace at Whitehall. A few sound from a pipe gave the signal, and directly the gates were opened, and the party entered the courtyard. They all dismounted, and three of them followed the gate-keeper into the palace, whilst those left behind led the horses on one side, but without relieving them of their accoutrements. The three men proceeded through several rooms, in the older part of the palace, until they came to a long gallery, which showed, by the dust which had collected on the beautiful carving, that it was but rarely used.

"Through this gallery," said one of the men, "I passed in going to my first audience with Queen Elizabeth. Is not the library adjoining?" asked he of the guide.

"Yes, my lord," answered he: "the illustrious lady used often to walk up and down here, with her book in her hand, while foreigners, and even those of the highest rank, concealed themselves, in order to catch a glimpse of her through the windows which look into the anteroom."

The party advanced, and followed the porter into a room, which had evidently been a library, but which was now emptied of the treasures Elizabeth had collected there. The elder of the party approached a recess, where a desk was standing; he stood long silent before it, for his thoughts had turned to the great queen.

"How many wise decrees have gone forth from this place," said he at last, turning to his companions. "Who can acknowledge her greatness, without feeling that she was far before her age in mind; and does not this make us willing to forgive the weaknesses which were the consequences of that age? With one exception, her government was perfect. But this act her successor has forgiven; for

he could not find traces of her greatness without doing so; and now that his life is declining, it appears to me wrong to have troubled his last few hours as we did yesterday."

"Yes, my lord," answered the second, "and how much haughtiness had we to overcome. If we only blame the duke, who always abuses us, we do nothing new. We must not forget that a son stands by the king's side: if the duke rules him as he has done his father, what a wide field for calamitous apprehension is opened before England, and before her who will be so soon be related to him. What more has the ambassador of France to do, after his work of yesterday?"

"Certainly," answered the elder one, smiling, "he will wait the events of this morning before he seals his despatches, for what happened yesterday was not unexpected by his court. At all risks, were I the French ambassador, I would advise the Princess Henrietta not to desire to be anything better, at her husband's court, than a good quiet housewife. I even believe that that was the advice which the Spanish ambassador gave to the Infanta, and that upon the instigation of an Englishman."

"Now, in truth," laughed the other, "that is advising the French ambassador to do as the brave Englishman bids him."

"The consequences must decide whether such advice were to be trusted to."

"And yet I venture to say," answered the other, "that the star of that wise Englishman still shines over England; but it was heaven's will that our country should be united with France, instead of with Spain."

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of Master Porter, the chamberlain of the Prince of Wales. The elder of the party drew back, but the second advanced quickly towards him, saying,

"Master Porter brings us, I hope, good news?"

"You will be better able to judge when I have given you my message," answered Porter, bowing low to all. "I can simply say that his majesty wishes to receive the ambassador in his bed-room, and that the gentlemen who accompany him are to remain in the

anteroom; that is, if his excellency the ambassador declares them to belong to his suite."

"Very well, very well," said the marquis, laughing; "but do you think we shall be safe there?"

"I think the duke is somewhat angry with his royal highness the prince," said Porter, laughing, "and is now expecting a visit from him, to explain the events which occurred at yesterday's levée. I conducted the prince to his majesty about half an hour ago; perhaps your excellency will allow me to inform them of your arrival?"

"Everything is as we could wish," said the marquis; "let us hasten, then."

"I must beg you to remember," said Porter, "that no dependence can be placed upon the duke's humour, and that we dare not set any guard outside the anteroom, for fear of attracting attention. The prince would never forgive us, if the king were to be disturbed by any intrusion on the part of the duke. He was angry at what occurred yesterday, and does not wish the king to see the duke again. If the marquis desires it, we can, upon the king's authority, refuse every one admittance into the anteroom."

"Make me the bolt, my dear lord," said the younger one of the party, "and I will hold fast till you drive me away."

"I learnt yesterday, young man," said the lively marquis, "that you, like iron, easily give out sparks, but I should be sorry to expose so noble a metal. The post is a dangerous one."

"I do not seek danger, and I yesterday showed a little of my warmth without repenting of it; but to-day a higher interest impels me than that which made me resist a careless, insolent fool."

"Trust to him," said the elder. "I know he is equal to what he promises."

"Well, then, show us the way: I know it not. My French cunning has not yet made me acquainted with the back-staircases in Whitehall."

CHAPTER XXVII.

“For God’s sake, my dear marquis,” exclaimed the old king, rising in his bed to receive the ambassador, “do not think that I was afraid of you yesterday ; but it seemed to me so strange, that you should seize my hand in that way. It was against the etiquette due to a crowned head, although I consider you as the representative of my brother of France.”

“But this one thing excuses my vehemence,” said the marquis, “that it was my royal master who commanded me to take this step, and who also desired me to crave this audience. Will your majesty deign to receive this letter, which I bring you from my gracious master ?”

He knelt in order to present it.

“I beg you, my dear marquis, to rise. I permit you to sit down, and I am rejoiced at the friendship of my royal brother, although I do not approve of his communications respecting that poor young man, Buckingham, with whom all are angry, except my prince and I. Your letters have nearly made me angry with you ; but if you could hear Buckingham himself, I think he would be able to justify his conduct. He dislikes Bristol simply out of love to me, because he knows that he deceived me, and brought on this war, and prevented the best match in Europe for my prince, which was shameful, for I loved Bristol as my oldest friend.”

The king sobbed ; and the marquis, after waiting a few moments, replied,

“My master has irresistible proofs that the Duke of Buckingham has regarded the whole affair in a false light, and that he has purposely done so, because he would not allow the earl to have a place in the heart of his old friend. It was impossible that my master could bear that your majesty should be annoyed by any suspicions of an old and faithful servant, which suspicions the duke endeavoured to strengthen, possibly out of jealous love to your majesty.”

"Yes, yes, you are right," said the old king; "Steenie loves me so much, that he is easily made jealous."

"But," answered the marquis, "if this weakness in Buckingham appear pardonable, because of the illustrious object of it, what must that true servant, who has served your majesty from his youth, suffer from being the victim of this jealousy? And so it is with your Bristol, gracious sire: he pines away, without the consolation of beholding that face which was once the light of his life."

"Oh, my lord," said the king, with emotion, "you speak well, but you are interested for this lord. I have exercised justice all my life, and this is the first time that Bristol has failed me. I will beg Buckingham to tell me the truth; and if it be that my dear old Bristol has been true to me, then he shall be reconciled to his old king. And listen, my lord marquis. We can recollect much that happened a long time ago: we have had both happy and unhappy days. If I had no money, Bristol's treasury was open to me; and even afterwards I could not repay all. See, it has always struck me, that perhaps it was owing to Buckingham that my good Bristol so suddenly became a traitor to me. And does the good old earl think that I am angry with him? You cannot think, my lord marquis, what old friends we were."

"And if it were so still, your majesty, it destroys the old man's life to think that his royal master no longer permits him to see his face, and that he shall no more hear the words of confidence and kindness which have hitherto made him so happy. Grief has whitened his hairs; his nights are deprived of rest, and his days consumed in wishing to kiss the hand of his king once more."

"I pray you, my dear marquis, be not so hard towards me. I would willingly see him again, if he be innocent, as you, in the name of my royal brother of France, assure me that he is. But it is hardly possible; for if Buckingham hear of it, (and nothing remains concealed from him,) you may imagine what my prince and I, and even Bristol, will suffer. He will be the death of him if he finds him here; and as he would not let me see him at first, I have been obliged to banish him. Remember that you arrived here only

by a stratagem, which frightened me at yesterday's levée, and which I willingly forgive for the sake of your zeal for my dear Bristol."

The marquis was much touched by the sorrowful look of the old man, whose naturally weak mind was so overawed by this insolent favourite, that it seemed as if he had forgotten that he possessed any power, and, being again a child, feared this man's displeasure more than anything else.

"And this," said the marquis, "is to be my answer—the answer which Bristol anxiously tarries to hear?"

"I promise you, dear marquis, that I will consider about it; and tell my dear old Bristol that he must not make himself unhappy; for if he be innocent, which I would willingly believe, I love him as well as ever; also, that if he will wait patiently, we shall be reconciled after all. But certainly," added the old king, raising his wasted face to the ambassador, "we have not much more time."

"Oh," cried the marquis, overcome with emotion—"oh, pray, use this moment! He is under the protection of France, and relying on this, I brought him here: he is waiting in the ante-room. Say but one word, and he will be at your feet."

"For God's sake, what do you mean? Help! help! treason! I am lost! They are using power over me! Baby! Steenie! help! help!" cried the old king, drawing the coverlet of his bed over him.

The marquis had need of much self-command to look coolly on all this; but he was resolved to accomplish his mission.

"I must remind your majesty," said he solemnly, "that the ambassador of France stands before you, commissioned by his royal master to plead on behalf of the Earl of Bristol. It is neither a murderer nor a traitor who speaks to your majesty, but one whose mission is peace."

"Well, well," said the king, somewhat ashamed of himself, "I understand that I am listening to an ambassador, and not to a stranger."

He turned uneasily in the bed, and his eyes wandered to the door

at which the marquis had entered. At last he smiled, and making a sign to the ambassador to approach, he said softly,

"Is he really there?"

The marquis answered in the affirmative.

"Well, then," said the king, his eyes beaming with joy, "let him come in before he is discovered, and keep watch lest any one enter."

The marquis flew into the adjoining apartment, and hastily drawing the cloak from Bristol's shoulders, said,

"Quick! he will be reconciled to you. Yet," added he, sorrowfully, "compose yourself: be content with his affection, and do not attempt to defend yourself: he will not understand you, and you will lose time."

Bristol pressed the marquis's hand, and followed him into the king's apartment. A sound of weeping issued from the bed. The faithful servant knelt down, and the king gently laid his hand upon his head.

"Speak, Digby," said James; "you have nothing to fear from your king, for I believe, as the good marquis says, that you would not betray me."

"God knows," answered Bristol, drawing himself up proudly, "that I would rather have stabbed myself to the heart with this dagger than have betrayed my king."

"I thought so, my old friend; and I must tell you in confidence, that what you arranged with the Infanta was far more pleasing to me than what my dear Steenie has decided with regard to the French princess. Meanwhile, as a union between Baby and the Infanta is impossible, and as there is only this one royal princess left for him, I can say nothing against Steenie's zeal, although he may wish to diminish your merit. But for my sake, I beg you to be quiet, and do nothing which can bring a war upon us. See, Bristol, another will soon be in my place: I will commend you to him; for my hours are numbered, and I would have the few yet remaining to me undisturbed."

"And never shall those precious hours be disturbed by me," said Bristol, deeply moved by the return of confidence of his king.

"I have had but one wish—that was to be reconciled to my sovereign, and once again to kiss the hand of him whom I have obeyed throughout my life."

"You have done well to wish this," said the king, "and you have pleased your old friend. They say my fever can be cured, but I know better. Yesterday was my last levée. I shall soon, I hope," added he, gravely, "join the assembly before the throne of the King of kings. I have no fear, Bristol; for whether I have done all that any one in my place could do, he only knows who gave me my power; but I have rarely omitted what I knew was right, and if you, my old friend, will forgive me, then I shall not fear the judgment that awaits me."

Bristol's eyes filled with tears: he covered his face with the withered hand of the aged king, and groaned sorrowfully.

"Oh, my king!" said he, "if I must survive you, every breath of mine shall be gratitude and love; but it may please God, perhaps, soon to unite me with him, to whom I have dedicated all my powers."

"Yes, see my friend," continued the king, becoming more composed, "no man can say of another, that he is ripe to go hence: but something within us makes us long for another world. I now wish nothing but to die in peace, since I am reconciled to you. I commend you to my prince. You know the maxims which I have always followed: therefore be ever by his side, that is, if you can be friends with Buckingham; but I tell you, when once an idea takes possession of his mind, nothing can erase it. I could say much about him, without wishing to blame him."

The king started and hesitated, for the sound of voices in the adjoining room was heard. The cold quiet tone of the prince could be distinguished, and also the lively voice of the marquis, who had retired thither after he had led Bristol to the king, and still remained in the antechamber.

James coloured as he listened to these sounds, and then smiling, exclaimed,

"Steenie is not there, or he would have been in here before now. But Charles is a good ~~son~~ he will not disturb his old father. Yet

my dear old friend, you will oblige me if you would retire behind my curtain."

Bristol did not like the idea of being thus concealed; and before he could conquer his pride sufficiently to comply with the king's request, the door opened, and the prince and the marquis entered the room. The former turned away from Bristol as if he did not see him, and approached his father's bed. The king stretched out his hands to him, and he pressed them to his lips with almost childlike reverence.

"My dear child, my dear son," said James, "God bless you! Your old father is your first and your last thought. Come quite close to me; sit upon my bed."

"I hope," answered the prince, "that my dear father is improved, and that nothing has occurred during my absence that can have any illeffect on his health."

"Health, child!" smiled the king; "that word does not any longer suit me. There is no health here: there is only sickness, for which a little agitation is sometimes beneficial."

"Beneficial!" repeated the prince. "Would to God that it may be so; but if it should prove otherwise, the person who has caused it shall be responsible."

"Well, well!" said the old king; "if you will permit it, my prince, we will just talk over our affairs. Listen, child: I will have peace during my life: you will not be obliged to keep it much longer for my sake. Now," added he, good-humouredly, "I do not wish to say anything unpleasant to you. Come nearer, my prince, and do me the kindness of being reconciled to him who stands behind you."

"My gracious father," said the prince, without looking round, "has but to command, and I will obey, even though my feelings should rebel. But I would beg him who is the cause of this sacrifice, to reflect that I may not always be in the same obedient mood as at this moment."

"Listen," said the king, much provoked by his son's manner, "you must not be angry; for as you will soon be king, your anger is more to be feared than mine. But apart from that, I tell you, as

your king and father, that you have already learnt too much from the duke; and it is not at all pleasing to me, that you are as obstinate as he is. Before the journey to Spain, you were more tractable; and therefore I beg you to oblige me, and to look graciously on him who stands there."

"I think, most gracious sire," said the prince, in a tone of obstinacy, "that the man to whom you allude has neither the wish to meet my eye, nor the courage of a pure conscience to present himself before one whom he has injured."

These words were scarcely spoken, when the Earl of Bristol advanced, and, bowing reverentially, said in a gentle but firm tone,

"I delayed appearing so long as my gracious king spoke for me, but I do not err, if I understand that these last words were addressed to me. I am therefore before you; and the courage of a pure conscience increases the desire of a faithful servant to receive again the favour of that master whom he has long and zealously served, and whose unjust suspicions have made his hairs gray with sorrow, and brought old age upon him before his time."

The prince was moved. The expression of honesty was so strong in the earl's countenance, that he felt it almost impossible to believe that he had been a traitor. Still, though he acquitted him of having prevented the alliance with the Infanta, yet Buckingham having always declared that he had caused the approaching war, he had so prejudiced Charles, that the prince at last believed all that was said of the earl's treachery.

"I cannot any longer overlook you, Lord Bristol," said he, coldly; "but if I refused until now to take any notice of your presence, it was in obedience to the will of the king, who, I think, banished you from London, where I nevertheless find you; though no change in the king's will has been made known."

"Your highness's reproach hurts me the more," answered Bristol gently, "because for a long time I made this objection to the good intentions of my friends; but might not a kindlier feeling than justice induce your royal highness to listen to the reasons which caused my disobedience?"

The prince turned impatiently away, but the king raised himself in his bed, and said,

“Relate all to me, Bristol. You certainly had some good reason for being disobedient to me; but I have forgiven you, and now tell me how it all happened. I forgot to ask that.”

“When I left London, according to the commands of your majesty,” said Bristol, “and retired to the estate of my daughter, I was firmly resolved to beg your majesty to recal an order which cast a stain upon a name hitherto not only untarnished, but honoured by all. My repeated requests, however, did not reach your majesty’s ear; and all my endeavours were frustrated by the machinations of my enemies.”

“My lord,” interrupted the prince, “the accused should not appear as the accuser, and to excite mistrust in those who listen to you, is not to justify yourself.”

“Accused?” repeated the earl, “accused, and unheard! refused a hearing at the throne of justice, and driven from my king’s presence! Accused! yes, and refused all means of justifying myself. Yes, I repeat it once more—Lord Archibald Glandford made the request three times in my name, and it has never reached his majesty’s ear.”

“True, true,” cried James, “I have never received it, to my great sorrow.”

“At last,” continued the earl, “I resigned myself to the generous compassion of that monarch, who will soon be joined by the holiest ties to the interests of England. The destruction of the plans which I had formed was a matter of rejoicing for France; and the illustrious monarch sympathized in the fate of him who had suffered through their downfall. The marquis had in vain tried to obtain an opportunity of asking this favour; and at yesterday’s levée he introduced Lord Richmond, who presented a letter, begging for justice for his grandfather, and also for this audience.”

“Yes, yes,” said the old king, “that is all right: the marquis’s behaviour was strange; but we should have consented to his request, even without your grandson kneeling to me.”

“And this request, then, was covered by the presenting the despatches,” said the prince, laughing bitterly.

The marquis smiled, and bowing as politely as if the prince had paid him a high compliment, simply pointed to the door which led from the king's apartment to the anteroom. Sounds of quarrelling were heard, and a violent knocking at the door startled all present.

“There is Buckingham!” cried the king, almost beside himself. “Oh, God! must I, a poor old man, be so teased. I am not allowed even to mention Bristol's name, and now he is himself here. Oh, Bristol, how can you answer for having placed me in such a situation?”

The prince and the earl were both filled with shame for the weakness of the poor old king; and perhaps the former felt his confidence shaken in that haughty man, who possessed the power to excite such fear in his sovereign.

“Your majesty,” said the prince hastily, “will certainly allow me to put an end to the unpleasant dispute which is being carried on in the anteroom; and if your majesty will permit it, the marquis and the earl had better depart through that other door, and thus avoid meeting the duke.”

“I thank your royal highness,” answered the marquis: “every passage here should be open to the ambassador of France; but I lament that an accident has obstructed that by which I entered, for the door of that cabinet is locked. However, if your highness will permit the Earl of Bristol and myself to follow you, we shall fear no hindrance.”

The prince compressed his lips: he did not feel so confident of their safety as did the marquis; but it was necessary that something should be resolved upon, for they all feared lest the duke should force the entrance, and that scenes might occur which would agitate the king.

“Lord Bristol,” said Charles suddenly, “pray his majesty to allow you to depart.”

Bristol kneeled before James, and the grief of this moment, which

separated the earl for ever from his royal master, was only alleviated by the conviction, that though oppressed by age and weakness, he had nevertheless exhibited some of those noble feelings which characterized his more youthful days.

"Yes, go," said the king sorrowfully, giving him his hand; "I will forgive you for disturbing me: but you might have allowed the matter to be delayed until Charles is king: he can settle your affairs much better than I."

"Oh, say not so," said Bristol sorrowfully. "I did not come to justify myself, but only to receive one look from you, and to tell you that I am true and unchanged."

"Yes, yes," cried the king, "I do not doubt you. I never have thought you untrue, and therefore there was no necessity for your visit. Now go. Farewell!"

Bristol said no more, but kissed the hand which was extended to him, whilst the king turned his face towards the wall, as if to prevent any further attempt at conversation.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Lord Richmond had placed himself outside the door of the ante-room, with the resolution of preventing any intruder from interrupting the meeting between the king and his grandfather; and remembering the marquis's advice, he had concealed his sword beneath his cloak, that it might not attract attention. But was it possible that anything could take place in the palace without Buckingham being informed thereof? Richmond had no doubt, when he heard the duke approach, of the intention with which he came; and he heard him address the old man who was on guard in the adjoining passage, with a carelessness evidently feigned.

"Well, my child, who is there in that room? How is my royal master this morning?"

Without waiting for an answer, he continued.

"I hope to give my master an agreeable surprise, by paying him so early a visit. I ordered Clervon to bring his harp to my bedroom door at six o'clock, in order that pleasant sounds might greet my ears when I awoke, and that I might thus rise in a good humour, and take my early breakfast with James's slippers and dressing-gown. Am I not very merry this morning? eh, old man?"

"Very, please your grace," stammered the person thus addressed, and endeavouring to withdraw himself from Buckingham's heavy hand, which grasped his shoulder.

"Well, well," said the duke, laughing, "go and fetch yourself a morning draught, for your tongue cleaves to the roof of your mouth. Open the door, and then I won't detain you."

This was exactly what the old man dared not do, for the king had commanded that these doors should not be opened until he gave the order.

"His majesty—" stammered the old man.

"That is enough," said Buckingham, who perceived that access to the king was denied to him; "don't tell me anything more. Open the door, and then I can hear the rest from the king."

"But his majesty has forbidden it."

"Forbidden?" cried Buckingham; "and what signifies that to me?"

"His majesty desired that not a single exception should be made."

"I will soon banish your scruples, and also remind you that I must not be opposed," said the duke, thrusting aside the old man, and with a violent kick he succeeded in opening the door. To his great astonishment, he found the next door also guarded, and that by his opponent of the preceding day. Who was with the king he knew not; but as soon as he saw Richmond, forebodings of mischief filled his mind. Without appearing to notice him, he approached, and laid his hand upon the lock, when Richmond exclaimed,

"My lord duke, the king has forbidden any one to enter."

The duke started back, and fixing his eyes upon Richmond, said, in a jeering manner,

"Ah! a new page; I did not know that. Did they give you the shoulder-knot last night, that you crow so loudly this morning? Listen, child! You are new to the business; therefore I will give you some advice. I am the Duke of Buckingham, and for me there exists no such prohibition as that you mention."

"I know the Duke of Buckingham," said Richmond, coldly; "and I need not tell him that I am not a page, but that I wear sword and spur. I am commissioned by his majesty to give the answer to the Duke of Buckingham which I just now repeated."

"I will excuse you from continuing this folly, and desire you to retire. I wish to see the king."

"The duke mistakes," answered Richmond, coolly; "he forgets that this is not Buckingham-house, but Whitehall; and that these are the king's apartments, wherein only his majesty's will rules; which will I have made known to you, and which I have to defend."

"What do you mean?" cried Buckingham; "does a boy dare to deny me access to these rooms?"

"I beg you, my lord duke," answered Richmond, "so to moderate your expressions, that an honourable man may not be called on to resent them."

"Do you think, then, that your words, or the words of all England, added to those of all the kings and queens that ever lived, could drive away Buckingham, if he chose to enter? Once more leave this spot, and do not hinder my access another minute; or by heaven you shall repent of your ignorance, which is the only possible excuse for your being here."

"Excuse me not, my lord," said Richmond: "it is my own will to remain here. I will not be excused by you; my conduct needs no apology."

"Ha!" cried Buckingham, "you disdain my indulgence, therefore you shall feel my anger."

In a violent rage, he pushed against the door, and knocked upon the lock with the hilt of his sword, while Richmond seized his arm and held him back.

"Draw and defend yourself!" exclaimed Buckingham, taking his sword from its sheath; but Richmond loosed the belt which confined his own, and threw it, together with the sword, to the furthest end of the room.

"I promised not to draw," said he, "and therefore you may commit a murder if you choose. By no other means shall you open this door."

He threw off his cloak, and stood unprotected before Buckingham, who was at first surprised at his firmness; but maddened at the thought of being contradicted, he rushed with fury against Richmond, who stood before the door. Buckingham was well known to be a giant in strength, and it required all Richmond's adroitness to parry his attempt and maintain his post. Just at this moment, the door opened from within, and the Prince of Wales appeared.

"Peace! In the name of the king, peace!" cried he to the furious duke, who, perceiving that the path was free, tried to rush past him to the king's room.

"The king, my lord duke," said the prince, "is astonished to hear that you are still in London. He thought that after yesterday's audience, your departure would be immediate."

"His majesty," answered the duke, "cannot be surprised at my wish to see him once more; and since he has given so early audience to others," he added, seeing Bristol and the marquis behind the prince, "I cannot doubt but that I also should have been received, had not this officious boy chosen to play the part of door-keeper!"

The prince's eyes turned to Richmond, who bowed respectfully.

"I have to give you the king's wishes for a pleasant journey," said the prince; "I add mine to them, and hope to meet you, the next time, under more agreeable circumstances."

Buckingham was mute from anger. He had never ventured to frighten the prince, as he was accustomed to do the king, for the former knew his own dignity, and was resolved to maintain it. The marquis also endeavoured to restrain him, and nothing but his extreme haughtiness would have induced him to persist in his insolence.

"I can honour and obey any commands coming from the prince's

lips," said he, "and I only ask permission to depart under the protection of the marquis, for I cannot think myself safe in a palace guarded by bullies."

"This request is granted you," said the prince gravely. "My lord marquis, I dismiss you; Lord Bristol, farewell. I foresee that we shall meet again: meanwhile, be assured that I have not disregarded the words of my royal father; and you, Lord Richmond, accompany your grandfather. If I mistake not, you have to-day exhibited the first virtues of a manly character—courage and moderation. Take up your sword: you know better than to use it in the palace of the king. My lord marquis, we will allow our suite to attend the Earl of Bristol, not only out of this palace, but also to his own castle."

The prince bowed proudly, and preceded the party to the great hall, where he detained the marquis to say a few words, having bade farewell to the duke, who hastened with his attendants to his own residence.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Duchess of Nottingham was sitting by the side of a bright and glowing fire, meditating on the various occurrences which had lately taken place in her family, when the Earl of Bristol entered the room, and laying his hand on his daughter's shoulder, aroused her from her reverie. The meeting was a sorrowful one; and the earl hastened to relieve her mind by relating what had passed.

"I have parted for ever from my king, Arabella," said he, after having told her all.

"And the prince?" asked the duchess.

"God grant that his distinguished qualities may be called into action, and then he will be a blessing to his country; but I shall not find in him a friend. Let us quit this melancholy subject. I have something to tell, which will give you pleasure. Anna Derset

bags, through me, your blessing. She became the wife of your son on the same day that I quitted London."

"I have long looked forward to the marriage of my son," said the duchess; "by his union with Anna Dorsét, he will sustain the honour of his family. I rejoice to hear that my wishes are accomplished."

"I am much pleased with my grandson," replied Lord Bristol; "and shall be glad to see him here. They will soon leave London for Godway Castle, and Olonia Dorset will accompany them."

"And Richmond," asked the duchess; "may I not expect him also?"

"Richmond," answered the earl, "appears to have other business to interest him, and to the accomplishment of which he considered himself pledged, even before my affairs claimed his attention. He sends his respectful greeting, and desires me to tell you that Lord Membroke has suddenly appeared at court, and not only assured both himself and Lord Ormond that the Lady Melville was no longer in his hands, but evinced so much vexation and annoyance that they concluded his scheme had been frustrated. Richmond added, that he had received some intelligence of her from an unknown person, and that he would not rest until he could bring you good news of her."

"My son," said the duchess, coldly, "might, I think, have waited until I commanded him to seek the lady. I am both astonished and displeased at his renewed interference in this affair."

"My child," said Lord Bristol, interrupting her, "we must not forget that a time is coming when our children will think themselves independent of us. This must happen when the heart becomes touched by the most powerful feeling in nature—when love first gains an entrance into their thoughts."

"Good God," exclaimed the duchess, "I trust, my dear father, that you do not allude to Richmond in these words. No; you surely do not mean that this time with him has yet arrived."

"What alarms you, Arabella? It is impossible that Richmond should make an unworthy choice. Melville is an old name, and he referred me to you for a testimony of her talents and her virtues."

Robert also speaks with rapture of her, and incites his brother to activity. Is not this all a high compliment to her worth?"

"Say no more, my dear father," said the duchess with a trembling voice; "but tell me whether you really think that Richmond loves her?"

"Richmond is delicate in making known his feelings, but still I think he loves the lady; and Robert has confirmed my opinion. But what disturbs you so much, my child? Why does the mention of this young girl affect you?"

The duchess rose as her father uttered these last words, for she could not bear that he should be a witness of her misery; but a train of anxious thoughts crowded upon her mind, and she could only utter a request for repose. Lord Bristol immediately yielded his assent, and after bidding her farewell, retired to his own apartment.

CHAPTER XXX.

We will now return to Lord Richmond, who, during his residence in London, had been occupied with public affairs, in the hope of hearing some intelligence of our unfortunate heroine.

As he returned one evening to his brother's house, after leaving the palace, a servant informed him that a stranger, who refused to mention his name, waited to see him. Richmond immediately repaired to his room, and found there a gentleman, who, from his dignified manner, and also from his dress, he judged to be a clergyman of the Protestant church. The gentle gravity of his face, and the peaceful expression of his eye, rivetted Richmond's attention, and he conducted him immediately into his cabinet, and invited him to make known his communications.

"I know not, my lord, whether to call the business which brings me hither my own or that of a stranger: however, I am bound to use all my power in its execution. My name is Brixton, and is,

perhaps, not unknown to you in reference to a young lady whom your gracious family have protected."

"Brixton!" cried Richmond, with joyful surprise; "you are, then, that excellent Scotch clergyman to whom Lady Melville referred us for an explanation of her circumstances?"

"The same, my lord. Through an unfortunate concurrence of events, and owing to my long absence in Ireland, I have been prevented from fulfilling that holy duty to her, which was rendered doubly necessary by her situation. I did not receive your letters until my return to Edinburgh: for such was the uncertainty of my movements, that they could not be sent after me; and immediately upon my arrival I betook myself to Godway Castle."

He was silent, and appeared slightly embarrassed; but soon recovering he continued.

"I had the honour of an interview with the duchess herself, and from her I learned that this unfortunate lady had taken a step which was liable to misconstruction, and which may lead her into great danger, unless some efforts be made to prevent it. There was a time when all the power and consequence of the illustrious family of Nottingham would have been put in requisition to accomplish this. I do not reproach the duchess for her refusal to assist me. I myself could not communicate to her all I know about the lady; for I am restrained, by promises which I have made, from revealing her situation. I am, therefore, obliged to rely upon the sympathy which you perhaps may feel for her, and upon a confidence and trust which will be reposed in me in consideration of my sacred calling. Women are justified in exercising great foresight; and the affairs of the Earl of Bristol are, I am aware, quite sufficient to lay claim to the duchess's undivided attention. I have therefore received very little intelligence respecting the young lady's unhappy situation. I am myself obliged to seek information, and was resolved to lose no time in undertaking a journey to London, which was necessary in order to procure the assistance I need. But the aspect of affairs is quite changed. I cannot reach those who I know have the power to help me, and my movements are watched and defeated by some secret agency. I have even reason to believe that my personal safety is endangered."

"Sir," cried Richmond, whose heart was drawn towards this man, who had apparently met with no friendly reception at Godway Castle, and considering it a matter of the highest importance to show him favour—"Sir, receive the protection which this house and the name of Nottingham can give. My brother, who has succeeded to his father's title, bears it with no less honour than did his departed sire."

The clergyman bowed acceptance of his hospitality, and continued:

"I cannot but confess that your offer has anticipated a request which I might have made with security, as I will explain to you." He smiled; but immediately assuming his wonted gravity, and drawing forth a sheet of paper, he added, "I should not have had courage to claim the protection of the family of Nottingham, had not a person unknown to me, but who seems a well-wisher, hinted to me the danger of my situation, and pointed out my way. Do you know this handwriting?"

Richmond took the paper, upon which, though very incorrectly spelt, was written—"Your personal freedom is threatened. Seek the palace of the Duke of Nottingham. Lord Richmond will protect you."

"Strange!" cried Richmond: "who can it be that menaces your safety. Have you any conjectures?"

"I cannot at this moment guess, my lord. So much that was unexpected has occurred during my absence, that I cannot discover to what extent circumstances, hitherto wrapped in impenetrable darkness, but which involve the fate of Lady Mary, have become known to others."

"And do these circumstances refer exclusively to the young lady whom you call your pupil?"

"She was, up to the horrible moment which separated her from all her friends, the object of the tenderest love and solicitude, of the proudest hopes, and of the happiest expectations; and all who knew her felt themselves impelled, both by love and duty, to devote themselves to her. Alas! I am at this moment nearly the only one left to her. There is, however, one living, who is destined by God

and by right to become her protector; and to reach this one is my object in being here."

"You mean the lady's uncle, whom we have sought in vain, and for whom she unceasingly longs? Say, have you discovered him? Does he live here? and can we join with him in a search for her?"

"I lament much, my lord, that I am not able to meet your zeal with the confidence which I should wish; but I had better say, at the commencement of our acquaintance, that I cannot answer any questions which oppose the obligations I am under. If you can resolve to trust to me, we can unite in endeavouring to save her; and let the dignity of my office be to you a surety that you will not dedicate your efforts to an ignoble undertaking, and that you will unite yourself with none that are unworthy."

"Enough, sir; I honour your reserve, and only desire confidence in so far as it accords with your duty. Do not imagine that we quickly lost sight of the lady. Her path is tracked by one whom we may trust. She is known to have been separated from Lord Membroke, and left behind at a castle in Northamptonshire, while he continued his journey to London, where he was expected by his friend the Duke of Buckingham, his name being on the list of cavaliers who were to accompany the duke to France. My servant pursued Lord Membroke, until he had gone too far from the lady's abode to leave any expectation of his return thither. It is certain that her presence is concealed with the greatest care; since my servant found it impossible, on returning from the pursuit of the earl, to ascertain whether she were still in the castle, much less to see her himself. Family affairs obliged me to remain in London, or I should have hastened to follow the track we had discovered; and it satisfied me a little to know that she was no longer in Lord Membroke's keeping, although I believe he has still something to do in the matter, since the nobleman to whom that castle belongs is a friend of the Duke of Buckingham."

"Of the Duke of Buckingham!" cried Master Brixton, with visible surprise. "What, does the duke know anything of the lady? Do you think, my lord, that Lord Membroke acted as his agent?"

“I cannot say,” answered Richmond. “I impute all rather to the foolish love of Membroke, with which he persecuted the lady, though at first much against her approbation.”

“At first?” answered Brixton. “Do not doubt her. Your words imply that she did not afterwards reject his folly, as you rightly call it. Rest assured that she was led to this step by some other reasons. I know her well—too well not to be convinced that urgent motives must have induced her to do so hateful a thing.”

“Sir,” cried Richmond, agitated, “you have great confidence in her. Do you not forget her youth, and her passionate nature? This peculiar beauty of soul is destructive to a woman, leading her to overstep those bounds which she cannot even contemplate without being in danger.”

“I respect the noble feelings you entertain concerning womanly honour, and quite share your views; but Lady Mary discovers the most beautiful union of childlike innocence, and a strong conception of right and wrong. She has, considering her youth, great independence of character, which can only be accounted for by those acquainted with the guides of her early years, and the aim of her education. It is true, my lord, she does not belong to that portion of her sex, who, from a purity of soul, instinctively guard themselves, and thus remains beautiful objects, worthy of and commanding reverence. But Lady Mary has been purposely awakened to consciousness: she has learnt to separate what is truly pure before God, from the empty forms under which weaker souls secure their claims to respect, and the purer and higher feelings of man lie consciously oppressed by the ban of tyrannical power. She stands, with self-devotion and self-denial, before the throne of a great ideal, which, pure and continually unattainable, keeps her humble before God, and renders her cold to any remonstrances of man arising from another source. She is, therefore, warmer and more pliable to the great bond which nature has knit among mankind; she is full of reverence for social duties, which supply the place of affection. She is all this, and possesses likewise a delicacy and consciousness which of necessity make her appear, according to the common supposition, devoid of discretion.”

Richmond's eyes rested on the ground during the old man's speech. He remembered the ideal of his heart, and wished to examine whether it agreed with the description he had just heard. But he could not satisfy himself on this point: the images crowded one upon another, until at last he felt that his reverie had been indulged in sufficiently. With an agreeable mien he therefore hastened to break the silence.

"It does not in any way become me, sir, to raise a doubt on your words, which are confirmed by the appearance of the lady herself; and to retain mistrust would be the more dishonourable, because it is one of the most afflicting additions to her unhappy position. Once more receive the assurance that I am ready to act with you, and I hope that in a few days my affairs will be so arranged, as to enable me to follow the traces of the lady. Continue, then, sir, to forward this affair, to which you may prove so useful. Your arrival has removed one obstacle, the presence of which I felt continually. The lady will trust you, and follow you willingly, if we be so fortunate as to discover her; which consent we could hardly hope, for it was refused us once, when the conviction of Membroke's evil purpose had not struck her. Be cautious, and do not quit the protection of this house until our departure. We know not what may be the intentions of the unknown person who has warned you, but be assured that he has not erred in sending you here."

Lord Richmond now gave orders that some rooms adjoining his own should be prepared for his guest, and despatching a trusty servant to the inn for his luggage, would not permit him to leave the house.

The following day was employed in making the necessary arrangements with the young duke, who was introduced to Brixton, and who, joined by Lord Ormond, assisted in forming their plans. The feelings of these men, beyond all doubt, inclined them to promise Brixton their whole support; and he inwardly resolved to use every means to rescue the lady from her false protectors, since he found he had made one great step towards the accomplishment of that object, and since he could not help thinking the warning he had received was not unfounded.

The opposition which he had met with appeared to him to proceed from some discovery concerning the young lady, and he could not but connect her disappearance with his own persecution; although it seemed to him in the highest degree improbable that this should spring from the Duke of Buckingham, whom it was impossible for him to consider an accessory.

To take any step with the duke, appeared to him a hazardous undertaking, since, by rousing his attention, there was danger of discovering to him a secret hitherto sacredly preserved. He therefore resolved that the first thing should be to set her at liberty, and to leave the rest to time and fortune. He waited, in the closest retirement, for the period when his young protector should be able to devote himself to the business; for Richmond was at present occupied with the affairs of the Nettingham family. On the day of his brother's marriage, Richmond accompanied his grandfather, the venerable Earl of Bristol, with a princely retinue, to the boundary of his paternal possessions, and then hastened back to place himself under Brixton's command.

His first step was to seek Lord Membroke, who was to depart for France in a few hours, as the Duke of Buckingham, to whose suite he belonged, was not allowed any further delay. He found this vain and worldly man so surrounded by tailors, jewellers, embroiderers, and tradespeople of every description, that he appeared to have forgotten everything else, and asked Richmond to be present at the lesson a French dancing-master was about to give him in the dances now in vogue at the court of Paris.

"I think, my lord," said Richmond, with an expression of contempt, "it cannot escape you that I have not entered your house to partake in your amusements, but that there are graver matters between us, which must be discussed before I can permit you to indulge yourself in this manner."

"Right," cried Membroke, with astonishment, for at this moment the motive of Richmond's visit struck him. "We have had a little dispute," added he laughing, "about a sly little lady, whom I inveigled from under your care."

Richmond's spirit was aroused by the contemptible manner in

which the earl mentioned that beautiful creature, every suspicion against whom he had dispelled from his mind.

"I am not accustomed, my lord," said he, impatiently advancing towards him, "to discuss such affairs in the presence of fools. Take me to your cabinet."

"Willingly," replied Membroke, his good temper giving way; "willingly. Your company of fools collected here—you, my amiable companions, amuse yourselves whilst I chase a poor bat which has flown into my cabinet during the night. If you wish to assist me, my lord," said he, turning to Richmond, "step in here."

Richmond with proud eagerness entered the cabinet, followed by Membroke; but this apartment, like the other, bore marks of folly, and though no living, still there were lifeless objects, which appeared to oppose every graver purpose in existence.

"Let me stand," said Richmond, as the earl invited him to take a seat on a couch, which was covered with all sorts of articles; "I shall soon have ended what I have to say. Tell me whether you will repair to the family of Nottingham, who speak through me, the affront which you have put upon them, by enticing from their circle a young and irreproachable girl—tell me whether you will repair the insult by informing me why you enticed her away, and whither you carried her—or say if you prefer to cross swords with me at any hour you please?"

"Truly," cried Membroke, who with all his faults had the bravery of a cavalier, "at any price I will choose the latter, for the sake of the pleasure of knowing your sword."

"Well, then, you shall make the acquaintanceship," answered Richmond; "it is not too young to defend the cause of innocence, and, quite unpolluted, has never been drawn to defend any crime of its possessor."

"This is beyond all doubt, my dear lord," said Membroke, ironically: "the Nottinghams are all heroes of virtue. You have all, I believe, been educated by your strict mother, who, it is said, practised her method of instruction on your father before she attempted it on you."

"Speak not thus of my mother!" cried Richmond, vehemently:

“her exalted character and virtues are above your comprehension, and I cannot consent to hear you mention them.”

“Truly,” interrupted Membroke, recoiling, “you have cut the thread of our conversation. What do you wish I should speak of, if not of your beloved relations? I thought I had gratified you.”

“We have nothing more to say, my lord,” answered Richmond coldly; “what we intend can be arranged in a few words. Where shall we meet?”

“Even so,” said Membroke, his face suddenly becoming thoughtful; “that is a bad affair. How shall I find time? The duke sets out this evening, and I have much to do before then. You really embarrass me.”

“Is that the language of a man of honour, or do you intend to affront me by your evasion of my demand? You can find time: let it be the present moment, and let this floor be our field of battle.”

“Hold! hold!” cried Membroke, “we must not begin by doubting each other’s bravery. Every nobleman has as much courage as is necessary, without troubling himself about a few ounces of blood. I intended no affront to you; for,” added he, “I respect all who bear your name, or who belong to your illustrious house, on account of its spotless honour. But you must not expect us merry children of the world to act up to your scale of morality: we have other views of the enjoyments of life, and therefore do not regard a common love adventure as an affair of honour.”

Richmond struggled with emotion: he could not endure that the important business which had brought him hither should be mentioned in this careless way, and he began to fear that love had really instigated the whole affair. Turning aside to conceal his agitation, he replied, in a voice betraying both anger and grief,

“There can be no dispute between us about things on which we differ so much, that our opinions can never agree. Yet, though your words lead me to infer that some connexion exists between yourself and Lady Mary, I still regard your conduct as insulting to the honour of our spotless house, and therefore require from you the only satisfaction which you can give me.”

"My lord," answered Membroke, "had I time, I would not trouble myself to explain the matter by means of words, for, like you, I prefer the language of the sword; but I will be prudent, and, to speak honestly, the affair for which you require my blood is become quite indifferent to me. I have long since forgotten the prudery of the little fool: she is not worth the trouble of fighting for.

"Well," said Richmond, delighted at the concluding part of the speech, "I am not like a child, who merely desires to try his weapons; but I must request one piece of information—where did you leave the lady?"

"My good pleasure does not extend so far as you think, my lord. But now be quiet, and listen to me: you shall know all that can interest you, I promise you. But do not look so like a caged lion: my life is not safe here with you."

Somewhat ashamed of his vehemence, Richmond seated himself, resolved to listen attentively, and not to interrupt the earl's narration.

It is needless to repeat that with which the reader is already acquainted. Membroke did full justice to the conduct of the lady; and without naming Buckingham, he confessed that he had been commissioned by her uncle to conduct her to him. He related, with tolerable correctness, the means he had used to remove her from Burton, but as he omitted to mention the forged letter, he only excited Richmond's astonishment at her credulity. He likewise considerably altered the facts respecting her being at Sir Patrick's castle; whilst her flight from thence, which was really a mystery to him, he represented according to the truth.

Richmond, delighted at finding that his first suspicions were erroneous, was now disposed to regard the affair in the most favourable light. He believed all that Membroke told him, because he had completely proved the innocence of the young lady; and the imprudence which she had exhibited accorded only too well with the knowledge he possessed of her character.

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"My lord," said he, "I am content with your explanation, and

will act accordingly. But be assured that you remain responsible for the consequences of your faulty conduct; and if what you have told me be not the truth, you must, after your return, find time to answer what I shall then say to you."

"Oh, certainly," said Lord Membroke, resuming his careless manner. "I cannot have a more agreeable or a more honourable prospect on my return."

They took leave of one another politely but coldly; and we must add, that Membroke did not mention this conversation to Buckingham. He knew that the duke would not approve of his conduct, for his hatred towards the Nottinghams was so violent, that if once called forth, it could not easily be restrained; and perhaps his love of mischief also led the earl to keep the interview secret, as he could not resist a slight feeling of joy which crossed his mind at the idea of the Nottinghams discovering the lady, and thus thwarting the duke's plans.

Lord Richmond hastened meanwhile to acquaint Brixton with what he had heard; and having arranged their plan of action, the two gentlemen, accompanied by some trusty servants, set out for Sir Patrick's castle.

CHAPTER XXXI.

We must now conduct our readers through the passages and galleries of the old palace at Whitehall; and passing many inviting portals, we stop at last at the end of a corridor, where a low door admits us into a gloomy anteroom. We find there a youth, plainly clad, kneeling before the turf fire, and stirring some ingredients in a pan, which, to judge from the piece of linen lying on the table, and the smell of herbs which prevails, is intended to form a medicament for some sick person.

After quickly and skilfully spreading the warm preparation upon the linen, the youth steals noiselessly into an adjoining apartment,

which, from its loftiness, size, and style of architecture, appears to belong to the better part of the palace. Its interior arrangement presents the contrast of the most luxurious furniture intermingled with the most ordinary domestic utensils. Everything exhibits the greatest neglect. A deep sigh is heard to proceed from a couch in the corner of the room, on which lies an old man, pale, and wasted with age and sickness, to whom the youth has just carried the plaster he had been preparing.

"Now, uncle, the pain will abate, and you will fall asleep. When you awake, you will feel hungry; and if the sun shine to-morrow, I can lift you to the window-seat, and then you will be quite well."

Notwithstanding the little probability of the realization of these hopes, the dull eyes of the invalid gazed for a moment upon the youth, as if there was a balm in his words that alleviated for a moment the pain which he endured. Yet like most aged people, unwilling to agree with the youth's prophecies, he shook his head, saying in a reproachful tone, and heaving a deep sigh,

"Folly! folly! do you not see how much I suffer, and how low I am brought? Do you think that your skill will restore me, and set me on my legs again in a few hours? Truly, God is all-powerful," added he, almost weeping, "and if my hour is not come, I shall recover: but perhaps—perhaps, I may never rise from this couch again."

"Hush!" cried the boy, with youthful impatience; "why should you die! You are not old, and have as good medicine as the king himself. Your brother, Margaret's father, always says that man can bear much, and you must have patience. I will give you some drops, and the plaster will ease the pain which you feel."

This really appeared to be the case; for the suffering face of the old man became more tranquil, exhaustion followed his painful groaning, and he soon fell asleep. The young man sat still, watching the repose which by degrees stole over his uncle. His youthful face, notwithstanding the cheerfulness which had just illumined it, bore traces of weariness, the result, perhaps, of having

watched for many nights by the old man's sick bed. His eyes remained for some time fixed on his charge; but when the faint breathing of the invalid showed that he slept, they became weary, the heavy eyelids closed, and throwing himself on the floor, he was soon buried in a profound sleep.

The stillness which reigned in the sick chamber was soon interrupted. Light steps were heard in the anteroom, and a man, wrapped in a large mantle, appeared. Casting a hasty and inquiring glance around the room, he seated himself in a chair close by the bed of the invalid, at the feet of which lay the youth, in a state of unconsciousness. The visitor's lively little eyes glanced from one sleeper to the other: he examined the face of the old man with the attention of one who knew the signs of death, and with an expression on his face which told that he thought his end not far distant. He regarded the youth, on the contrary, with a look of curiosity and envy. What a quiet sleep! That was a felicity which he no longer comprehended, and which reminded him of his lost happiness. Was such a peaceful life to be scorned? He hastily moved his foot, which was near the sleeper's head, with a contemptuous smile. The old man did not sleep long: perhaps the piercing eyes of the stranger had enticed him back from the misty land of dreams. The sight of the visitor, however, appeared unwelcome, for he closed his eyes again with a sigh.

"You are much better, I see, old man," said the stranger; "you have conquered."

"Sleep and quiet are perhaps the most effectual remedies for an old man; yet, as you command, I am ready to obey: what is to be done?"

"Your recovery is welcome," said the stranger, "and your friends wish it, first, for your own sake; but other circumstances make it no less necessary for the sake of business."

The old man sighed, and sinking back upon his pillow, said, after a short pause.

"May I be permitted to hear how you have managed with Master Brixton?"

"Porter! Porter!" answered the other with an uplifted hand,

your first question is about that sneaking fellow whom we trusted to your care ; and now that we have nearly succeeded in rendering him harmless, he has disappeared, and we can obtain no intelligence of him. It is suspected, and not without reason, that he received some kind of warning from you ; and my last commission is to endeavour to move your conscience."

The lurking attention with which Porter—for it is the well-known chamberlain of the prince whom we have before us—listened to these words, changed into a quiet patient manner, as he said,

"The whole of my miserable life has been devoted to my exalted superiors, whom I must serve blindly, since to discover their aim is beyond my weak powers. When have I opposed my will to theirs ? Why, then, do you come to the bed of the dying man, and why use such hard words to a faithful servant ?"

"We have not always been sure of your blind obedience. We have trusted you with much, and expected some good result; but this has not been attained. Prince Charles, I think, evinces little inclination to protect his catholic subjects; and the illustrious woman whom we have chosen as our patroness will find herself lonely here, for the heart of her husband is more decided against her views, than prepared to receive them."

"Reverend sir," answered Porter, "you are come here determined to be angry; therefore you heap upon me commands which must remain unfulfilled, since they are far beyond my capabilities. Have you ever required more from me than to endeavour to moderate the aversion which the prince feels for our holy church, and to report to those reverend gentlemen, who are concerned in his spiritual welfare those actions with which a servant like myself can become acquainted ?"

"And yet I think," answered the angry man, "that much has failed, which, through a little better service on your part, would have saved us some trouble. For when did we learn the true situation of the Lady Buckingham ? Was it while there was yet time to neutralize her weighty and dangerous influence ?"

"No," answered the old man, with a bitter smile, "you heard it first, when, by the death of his brother, the prince became an object

worthy of your attention. It is true, I had been obliged to keep watch before that period; but my remarks were rarely demanded by you, for the attention of the brothers of the order was directed to the heir to the crown, and Lord Archibald was at that time more to be feared than all the beautiful countesses in the kingdom. But you had conferred upon another the guardianship of the illustrious Prince of Wales, which I would willingly have undertaken, had the undeserved kindness of my own master to me permitted it."

"It may be," answered the stranger, embarrassed by this reproach: "your observations were of no importance until later; but that does not excuse your negligence, and your superiors are of opinion that you have much to repair."

The invalid turned in the bed with an expression of pain, and his face, which before was covered with a deadly paleness, became flushed either through anger or mental suffering. He appeared as little able to bear with patience the harsh words of the stranger, as to justify himself, and the ill-temper which he exhibited gave the other an advantage over him. Meanwhile, this resistance to a despotic will was but a passing shadow in a mind long accustomed to servitude: the yoke, though loosened for a time, hung firmly about his neck; and it seemed as if he who had used the old man so roughly entertained no doubt of his ultimate compliance; for he looked upon his agitation with perfect calmness, and waited patiently until the expression of his features gave token of perfect submission.

"Porter," he began, after having given the old man time to collect his thoughts, "when did you see the prince, and what was his mood?"

"The gracious prince," answered the sick man, "is obliged to pass through this room to reach that of his majesty; thus I have the pleasure of seeing him every morning for a few minutes, and of hearing words which certainly are very gratifying to me, and which are to be ascribed to the early confidence he reposed in me respecting things which hung heavy at his heart."

"Well, well," interrupted the other, impatiently, "how far did they go?"

"Not very far," answered Porter; "but an old servant, who for

many years has watched his master, easily guesses the thoughts which are awakened in him by external objects."

"Well," cried the stranger, "what do you mean?"

"I am but a short-sighted tool of my superiors; but if I may venture to use any of the promptings of human weakness with respect to the affairs which are in the highest hands, it often appears to me that it is not advisable thus to distract the poor gentlemen's heart, and then leave him without any consolation. His disposition was always reserved and meditative, but kind and considerate towards every one; and the noble lady who until now has made him so happy in secret, and the beautiful child of this union, have kept his heart peaceful, despite the many cares which oppressed him. But since the prince has, by God's will, been deprived of this blessing—since the affectionate child has disappeared, his disposition has changed, and his character has developed itself rather differently from our expectations."

"What do you mean?" cried the stranger, moving nearer to the bed, and gently pushing the youth aside with his foot.

"There is danger," continued Porter cautiously, "when any thing suddenly fails a spoiled gentleman like the prince. All dispositions cannot sustain such a shock without being changed, and that often to their disadvantage. Terror, when we learn how powerless are our efforts against fate, often becomes anger, and not seldom remains anger against all the world, creating suffering around us, and carrying back anguish into our hearts; and wo, wo, sir, if this be the case with one destined to grace a throne."

"Old man! old man!" interrupted his auditor, "do you join imagination with cunning? Is what you say grounded on facts? Do those hints which you gave us respecting the consequences of the prince's illness—do they belong to your fancy? Was not the change merely the ill-temper of one recovering from illness? Or were these hints only the conclusion to which you were led by some favourite idea?"

The old man drew the coverlet over his shoulders, and said, with as much indifference as he could assume,

"Explain my words as you will, how do further assertions help

me? Are you not resolved to annoy and mistrust me? He first learns to express favourite suppositions, who has not the free will to express the slightest wish. But it is long since I indulged in those dreams: I know nothing of them now."

"Do not deceive me," continued the inexorable stranger. "I know how you would try to persuade me that this unfortunate child may be given back to her father without frustrating our views. Deny, if you can, that all your observations to us have been so framed as to lead us to think such an event harmless. Disown this weakness, which leads you to sympathize with the parental heart, which has but to endure a short crisis of grief, in order to change into joy the unceasing anxiety with which this creature has filled it."

"Who could venture to deceive you, reverend sir?" said the old man. "The main points can never escape your penetration; but you trust too little to my honesty. Do not reject what I have told you of the prince's character; for the death-dews on King James's brow foretel that all which lies hid in the prince's mind will soon be brought to light. Be mindful of it! He betrays the impatience of an unhappy man: he acts, in order to distract his thoughts. Mark his first step, for you will be deceived in your hopes. Henrietta of France will never rule him: if any one could succeed in doing so, it is that imprisoned maiden whom he rightly calls Mary Stuart and whom you retain to your own disadvantage."

The stranger pushed back the cowl from his forehead, and revealed the features of Father John, the confessor of the Lady Howard. He did not observe the furtive glances of Porter, who sought to discover the effects of his words in his uncovered face, and who perceived that he dwelt upon them with great attention.

"Yes," answered the father, "if this maiden, whom you call Mary Stuart had the superstitious zeal of her grandmother, whose unconquerable love to our holy church brought her to the scaffold, and rendered her fate a menacing standard against the Protestant faith, do you think that we should require your advice to bring her forward? But heretical blood, from both parents, flows in her veins. She has been brought up a heretic, and consequently has

remained deaf to all my exhortations. She is unmoved by the religious ceremonies, which she daily witnesses, and by the truth and sacredness of which her mind was formerly impressed. Loneliness, deprivation of air and exercise, and the loss of those vain, worldly, mental enjoyments to which her education has accustomed her, have no effect; and she is become strong as a man in the maintenance of her erring opinions?"

"Oh!" cried the invalid, sympathizingly, "does it fare so badly with the poor child."

"Yes," answered the other, inwardly irritated; "and so I fear it will remain, and therefore she will deprive herself of all hope for the future. We may think ourselves happy that the business is entrusted to us; for in Buckingham's hands, and with the addition of the worldly prudence which he would not have failed to impart to her, she would soon have caused the illustrious Catholic princess who comes to this country as an ambassadress from God, to feel the weight of the martyr crown upon her brow. And our influence—"

He paused, as if he had not resolution enough to complete the expression of the thoughts which forced themselves into words against his will. Porter also appeared uneasy, for he felt too strongly the obligations to his employers, which had led him to confound conscience and duty, to be able to separate his own interest from that of his superiors. Love to his prince, perhaps the only warm feeling of his heart, always declined when his interest to his employers was awakened. His secret wish to convert the prince to his own church concealed from him the wickedness of the conduct which he pursued, and that perfidiousness which he would neither have permitted nor pardoned in relation to anything else, appeared to him, in this case, sanctified by the end.

"There is much to be thought of," answered the priest, "and the obstinacy which you pretend to have seen in the prince is not unimportant; but this must all be confirmed before we bring forth this girl; as Buckingham's influence, which we wish to destroy, will receive strength from her presence."

"Most reverend sir," said the old man, as if animated by new thoughts, "tell me, was it not your earlier plan to give the young

lady into the hands of the illustrious princess, that she might present her to the father, and so turn his heart to herself?"

"We certainly did think of this, but it remained a thought only, for it was not decided whether we should get her into our power. Since she has become our property, that plan has been laid aside; for her appearance would be dangerous, even under the influence of the princess. Buckingham has an indisputable right over her, and will she not sooner turn to him than to a Catholic princess?"

The old man was silent, and remained sunk in thought until a new question arose in his mind, which he dared not ask plainly.

"The influence and officiousness of a number of persons, who serve the duke from fear, and a desire of gain, often procure him, in a surprising manner, intelligence of things which others wisely keep concealed. I have a painful foreboding as regards the holy castle and its inhabitants. There have long been rumours, which have hitherto been despised and laughed at; but should the duke, after his inquiries have proved vain, suddenly be struck by the idea that this important person was withdrawn from him by your hands, and concealed by your order, would he not institute a strict search for the place of her detention?"

"Old man," answered Father John, "you go too far: it is not intended that you should understand everything, and your precaution makes you as short-sighted as if you had no experience. Who has guided all these events? Who has protected this union and this child, keeping her ready until her aid was required for the attainment of certain ends? Who has done all this, with so firm but so unseen a hand, that she thinks herself in perfect freedom and safety?"

"Ah," answered the old man, with a malicious smile, "I know, sir, that it was the same reverend and wise gentlemen who ought to have buried the lady, without letting the duke know of her death—who permitted the long-watched treasure to escape, uncertain whether she found protection, or even whether protection on this earth was needed by her."

"A mistake—undeniably a mistake," stammered the priest, much confused, "but excusable under the circumstances. The wise

Hilary, who had undertaken this charge, was called away by the decree of the superior ; Father Clement, who alone appeared worthy to share the secret, was in France; the prince and the duke were in Spain ; the child, in Scotland : there appeared but little danger to be apprehended. It was a signal illustration how the slightest neglect may cause the failure of the most carefully concocted schemes. Meanwhile, the sequel shows that prudent men seldom are at a loss to discover means of rectifying such errors."

"Well," cried Porter drily, "it was certainly an oversight that the lady, as if driven by instinct, should take refuge with these Nottinghams, and that it needed the cabals of the duke to withdraw her from their protection."

"Yes," cried the other, laughing, "it was a masterpiece to let the silly, vain Membroke act as if he were an agent in our plans, and to cause both him and Buckingham to be duped by us."

"Do you think that the duke has not suspected this? do you think he will permit it to rest? How many have before now suffered for their forgery of his cipher! He vents his rage upon every one against whom the slightest doubt exists, excepting only the one whose close intimacy with the duke screens him from suspicion. Still the discovery is not impossible; and if Maxwell can save himself by betraying us, doubt not of his so doing."

"It may be: but for the first time he has forgotten everything; and the plaything which we have given him, the brilliancy and honour of this mission to the bride, which increases his folly and his danger, will also give him enough to do after his return. The clouds which hover above him, but which he cannot perceive, will be driven after him by the wind from France, and burst over his head in England. The scene which occurred through Buckingham's insolence at Whitehall, when he met Bristol in the presence of the French ambassador, has caused the prince to reflect; and he is silently investigating whether the earl's so-called treachery really deserved the name. Absence is always unfavourable to such favourites; and the duke will, I think, find matters changed on his return."

"And therefore," said the old man, "he will be the more anxious

to attain the means which will restore, if not increase, his consequence. Remember, *sir*, that at the time you kept watch over mother and child, the duke had no foreboding of their importance; nay, he did not even know of the existence of the latter. Now, it is a different matter, and even his vexation at having been deceived strengthens his interest in them. It was a dark hour, and fertile in consequences, when my gracious master received the news of the death of her, for whose sake he had made so great a sacrifice, and frustrated so excellent a political scheme; and it was in this dark hour that the union was formed with the duke; whom, till then, he had hated. From that time, we may date all that has since confused and endangered those plans; and we must acknowledge that the duke, perceiving what an advantage he had lost, quickly saw what was his duty. So also we have deigned to see that this discovery would be of no use to him; for it would only destroy his haughty plan of being the framer of as brilliant a union as that which Lord Bristol attempted to accomplish. Therefore this creature, whose importance as regards the future Buckingham well knows, must be kept back for the present, since her father, in his grief, might give her a legitimacy dangerous and insulting to France; but, believe me, when the marriage is once consummated, Buckingham will not forget that she is concealed from him in order to frustrate his future intentions. Who knows whether he be not at this moment acquainted with her abode, and permits you to have the charge of her simply because it would be troublesome to him."

A gesture of impatience from Father John interrupted the rapid, feverish words of the old man.

"I am not come to listen to your wisdom," said he, "nor to give way to babbling, which, carried on between two such persons as we are, can never bring them to the same opinion. My business with you concerns Brixton, who must be hindered from seeing the prince."

"I have done this as long as it was possible for me alone to watch the prince. Brixton did not succeed in seeing him: his letters were given into my hands; his daily visits were thwarted at every entrance into the palace; twice was he driven away by my

command; and he has been refused admittance whenever he appeared. I have sent commands and warnings to him from my sick bed, and he is no longer seen there; but I did not know that he had disappeared from his inn."

His importance is not to be overlooked," said the father: "we could carry off his well-instructed pupil as easily from him as from any other; but it is better that she should pass her life there, under strict guardianship, than that we should be obliged to have recourse to extreme means. The proximity of the castle to the coast of France secures to us an opportunity for her rapid removal, and separation from all the ties of her fatherland. Meanwhile, Brixton would be a welcome messenger to the prince, because of the traces which he has discovered of her residence with the Nottinghams, and because he would dissipate the idea of her death, which we wish by degrees to instil into him. Besides, it is not advisable to let Charles have near him a man who is one of the most dangerous enemies of the Catholic church."

"Well, well, I see clearly that he ought not to meet the gracious prince, who must be kept apart from those who can remind him of what he has lost. On this account, Hannah and Gersom's entreaties have been refused."

"The duke has prevented these two from troubling us," said Father John; "they are placed in the advantageous situation of guarding the castle, where they passed a long life in the hope of afterwards receiving a lucrative place near this child. Age, and the dangers they have passed through, have made them compliant, and they will cause us no more annoyance. You must first prepare the prince for the intelligence of the young lady's death. Father Clement is gone to France with the news of the hopes which she at first appeared to give us. I do not share his views of the matter, for the good man seldom sees things in their natural light. My intelligence is somewhat different; and I think the answer will make her repent of having exhausted my skill in the conversion of heretical minds. If I succeed, she shall never leave the castle again."

A glow of anger spread over his broad face; and Porter per-

ceived from the expression of his eyes what the lady had to expect; for the mighty weavers of this web especially relied on the intelligence which they should receive from this priest, whose spiritual pride had been so greatly wounded.

“ But Brixton—what do you mean to do with him? Perhaps he has desisted from his vain attempts, and has already set out on his journey back.”

“ We shall not, at least, ask your advice how to seek him. I shall soon discover some trace of him; let that alone. Till then, farewell.”

The father rose, openly yielding to his ill-temper, excited partly by the recollection of the wounds his pride had received, and partly by the suspicion that Porter had not been faithful to him. With a proud farewell, he left the bed of the invalid—whose gossip had interested the father more than perhaps he would have thought prudent had he reflected upon the grounds for suspicion which he entertained of the old man. Porter looked at him as he departed with an expression not unlike that of a cat, when, quietly watching her victim, she keeps it safe by the sharpness of her eye, well knowing she has the power, whenever she pleases, to set bounds to its freedom. Nevertheless, this malice was moderated by the reflections which forced themselves upon him. Symptoms of the mental struggle that was passing within appeared in his furrowed countenance, and he clasped the coverlet, convulsively drawing himself up and stretching himself out again, so that a spectator would not easily have believed that the plaster which the young man had administered to him had produced the desired effect. But we know that the distraction of the mind may cause convulsions which are inaccessible to all outward remedies, and which require that physician in ourselves who often refuses the necessary aid.

This struggle ended, as all others had done; though that love ought to have conquered which he bore to his prince, who appeared to him his benefactor, because to him was devoted the only warm feeling of a heart in which the influence of his priest was deeply rooted, by means of education, custom, religion, and zeal for his church.

There is, in all mankind, more or less, a struggle between the early impressions of education and their after convictions; and it is not difficult to perceive the action of the first in every individual, as it appears wrought into the matured mind; but we often meet also with those who, governed despotically by first impressions, repel every wider development, and gasp through life, slaves in a yoke from which they cannot free themselves. A being thus cramped, and, contrary to the intention of education, incapable of attaining a higher degree of mental cultivation, appears to us despicable: but we should often lay aside this harsh judgement, were a clearer insight into the character permitted to us. A germ of free conviction often exists under the burden thus strengthened by old customs and prejudices: it is secretly inclined to put forth its growth; but borne down by the heavy soil which oppresses, it cannot succeed in externally developing its life; and when the approaching end of those in years frees them from those earthly feelings to which they have been chained, then we perceive a sudden change, and cannot avoid exclaiming, "He is so gentle, that he will soon die." It is not the last days of life alone which produce this higher feeling: it is that the weak obstacles of the unfruitful past have disappeared, or offer no resistance, allowing the little germ to thrive which God so soon takes away to plant elsewhere.

This reflection enables us to discover the cause of the unusual emotion which appeared in the old man's face. It was soon conquered: he looked over the side of the bed to the sleeper on the floor, and wishing to awake him, he stretched his dry hot hand over the youth's blooming face. Deeply sunk in sleep, the young man thrust it away, turning himself round to continue his slumber.

The old man touched him a second time, and he awoke; but was a third time summoned before he could thoroughly rouse himself.

"Poor fellow," said the old man, compassionately, "you have not slept enough, I see, and you will be angry because I have disturbed you. Sit upon my bed, and recover yourself. See, there is some boiled fruit; refresh yourself with it: I have a commission for you."

"Willingly, willingly," cried the boy; "but tell me—how are you, uncle—are you well? has my plaster done you good?"

"Everything does good in its time," answered the old man; "but Death works also when he will. But enough, good Lanci; collect your senses, for you must show that you are a prudent and a silent youth."

"I am silent," said Lanci, in a confident tone; "my good mother has often praised me for that; and if you can make me prudent, uncle—"

"We will see, my child; but tell me, would you like to see Margaret again?"

"Oh, uncle," cried Lanci, "how can you speak of that? You know that I am here to take care of you. You wished to have one of your relations with you, and I came willingly, for I dared not any longer visit the castle; and, since I have nursed you, I will stay with you until you can walk about as usual. Then you will speak to Miklas about Margaret and me; for after Christmas I shall be a gamekeeper, and then I wish to have her for my wife."

"What I have promised I will faithfully perform," said the uncle; "but I assure you that all depends on what you now do for me. The happiest lot is yours, if you fulfil my commands with fidelity and prudence; but sorrow will be your inevitable fate, if you do not."

"Alas, uncle, you alarm me. How shall I overcome the danger which your words imply? Can I do it? Poor Margaret, what will become of her if I do not free her?"

"Free her?" said the old man, sternly; "do you know if she will follow you now? If the young lady, of whom you have spoken to me, possesses her whole heart, she will not leave her."

"I cannot believe that," said Lanci, sorrowfully; "for she has really promised; but then the poor lady would cry herself to death, if Margaret were not there to console her."

"I think so too, Lanci; therefore you must help me to save the young lady: then you shall have Margaret, and everything else that you want."

"Jesus! Mary! Joseph!" cried the young man, skipping about

with joy. "Speak, uncle ; say what I must do to be prudent, and I will be silent into the bargain. You shall be satisfied with me, I promise. Now tell me."

Porter looked thoughtfully at the young man, and appeared to be re-considering the affair, which now seemed doubly critical, since it involved the safety of this youth. There was no choice for him : he had always had more than one hand ready for every intrigue ; but this time his resources failed him, for his actions were about to deviate from the system hitherto followed. It cost him a sigh, and then, drawing the boy nearer to him, he proceeded to give the necessary instructions.

"You must start to-day," said he, "and quite secretly. As soon as it begins to grow dark, take your cloak, and slip out of the palace. Keep round the west wing, and follow the broad path, past Buckingham's lodge, till you come to the large square ; cross this in a northerly direction, and then you will find a road, on which you will soon perceive a large building, which is the palace of the Duke of Nottingham. Tell the gate-keeper that you want to see Lord Richmond Derbery. If he refuse this, stay there until he yields ; if Lord Richmond be not at home, wait there till he returns. Ask to speak to him alone : and tell him that the journey upon which he is going to-morrow will be of no avail, and that he must accompany you, if he wish for success in his undertaking."

"But what is his undertaking?" interrupted Lanci.

"Silence," said Porter ; "you must listen without interrupting me. He wishes to set at liberty the lady who is in Howard Castle ; he does not yet know where she is, but will go through the world to find her."

"Oh !" cried Lanci, laughing ; "I can help him, if he will come with me."

"Do you perceive what I intend you to do ?" asked the old man. "If he ask you, tell him where she is ; but if he desire to know whence you come, answer him not. Never let my name pass your lips ; never betray, by a single word, your relationship to me ; but use every means to convince his lordship the of truth. Do all quickly,

that he may hasten his departure. Tell him that the unknown friend who sends you to him recommends the greatest caution—the greatest speed. He can save the lady only by stratagem. She will be carried by force from the castle; yes, even out of the country. You must take a letter to Miklas, which I will write directly: follow his advice, and do exactly what he bids you. If the lady be saved, tell Lord Richmond that there is only one safe place for her—that is, his mother's castle; and not even there will she be secure unless the greatest secrecy is maintained; for she is menaced on all sides, and any intelligence of her abode will lead to the most violent persecution. Now remember what you have heard; repeat it to me once before you go; then give me my writing materials and a sheet of paper, and I will write to Miklas."

CHAPTER XXXII.

The long-expected moment was come, and the event of the eighth of April, 1626, plunged England into mourning. King James at length sunk under the fever which he had himself regarded as the harbinger of death. The mortal blow had reconciled all parties to the deceased monarch; even the numberless hearts of those who had loaded him with reproaches and complaints while the breath of life trembled within him. Every word expressed pity and mildness, showing that death alone overcomes the discontent of mankind, and that he only is beyond the reach of their enmity who is withdrawn from the great circle of life.

All eyes were turned towards the new star which was about to commence its course; and suspicions and forebodings were not wanting of that which really happened.

The frightful fate which Charles suffered opened a wide field for reflection, both to his contemporaries and to posterity; but it remains certain that so fearful a catastrophe in the history of a nation is not

brought about by that head alone which falls as the expiation of its errors. The long existing evils in which, during many centuries, a nation has been entangled, may be compared to an angry man, who, desiring to revenge a deeply-felt affront, and bleeding under recent inflictions, sacrifices the first who bears the colours of the enemy, though the individual himself be free from offence towards him. Charles was not faultless, but he was incapable of the guilt which could deserve such a punishment; and when we see him, though entangled in contradictions, fulfilling his duties with glowing zeal, and using with mildness and goodwill all the possible means for obviating the evils around him—then again, in his arbitrary disposition, mistaking men and circumstances, and bringing on the growing revolution by his carelessness;—then we remember Porter's words: "he will act with the violence of an unhappy man, who seeks to divert his thoughts."

If, while discussing what appear openly to us as historical facts, we could be permitted to know the secret history of men who play their part on the great stage of the world, and to fathom their motives, we should be astonished to perceive how deep in the heart is the feeling which controls their actions. With this view we should hesitate, and not judge of them too precipitately. A painful feeling arises of how man is separated from man; all the rest of earth's possessions can be shared except this inward feeling, which no description can make intelligible, and for which perhaps there is but one language, appearing little more than a youthful dream, the sound of which expires in the indurating of the heart, and of life! This loneliness, which we often feel, even while pursuing the ordinary business which occupies our time and attention, is perhaps the home of our devotion, of our connexion with God, whose intelligence we feel quickening us with the promise of unalienable justice.

Charles received the intelligence of the death of his father with childlike resignation. He had devoted himself to his parent till the last moment, sharing even the meanest offices with the attendants. His love had certainly soothed the last days of the king, and had also brought to the sorrowing heart of the son that peace which arises from the performance of a sacred duty. His dark, melancholy eye

and pale face touched every one who beheld them; and when he left the body of his father, that he might not hinder the necessary preparations, the attendants said that the new bearer of the crown resembled almost as much a lifeless statue as did the late king. Slowly, and followed but by a few persons, he passed through the empty rooms, till he came to the one occupied by the well-known Porter, which he entered alone, and with his head sunk on his breast and wrapped in gloom, he approached the bed of the sufferer.

"Thy king and master is no more," said Charles, repeating the already well-known intelligence. "I have no longer any parents: the grave opens more widely before me. Tell me what you long ago hinted at: have I also lost the last one who can bind me to this world? Fear not," added he, while Porter struggled fearfully for an answer: "I am ready to hear all—even the worst."

"So may God console your majesty!" stammered the old man; and he had opened his lips to say more, when the king, shrinking and pressing his sword to his side, nodded to Porter silently, and, like a sleep-walker, stiff and mute, left the room.

Porter remained in despair: he had not wished for this; but Charles's interpretation of his words was so rapid, and his departure so immediate, that the old man, being confined to his bed and not able to follow, could not quiet him. After some reflection, his sympathy with his master was overcome, and this reception of his words in part secured his own safety, at least for the present, for he had resolved, so soon as he knew of the lady's safe arrival at Godway Castle, to give the king some hope that she still lived.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Let us now turn from the death-bed of a prince, whose decease was the commencement of a period as important for England as his life was uninteresting—that life having comprehended so few im-

portant events, that it scarcely left a trace behind—let us turn from this to the last couch of a man so humble that his name has found no place in the register of history; but of so much importance to the principal persons of our narrative, that we must not overlook him.

We enter a little room, with which we are already acquainted, and whose vaulted roof, and tall windows reaching to the ground, discover to us the abode of the old Miklas, in the castle of the Duchess of Somerset. The walls are covered with black curtains; there is no fire in the empty chimney to give light and warmth; twelve wax tapers, with their weak rays, surround the raised corpse, in which we recognise the pale form of the old Miklas; the repose of the countenance, and the rosary hanging from the folded hands, show that he passed at once from pious devotion into death.

We hear, on one side, some person sobbing, and perceive Margaret, clad in deep mourning, kneeling upon the ground before Lady Melville; who, sitting upon a homely chair near the body, assists the inconsolable daughter to keep the melancholy death-watch. On the other side we hear a light murmur of prayer, in which certain holy names are pronounced with a loud accent, and we discover Sister Electa, who has undertaken the office of repeating the prayers for the dead. Occasionally Mary's voice is heard, when, forgetting her own sorrows, she speaks a loving and consoling word to Margaret. But how changed are those features, in which youth and beauty were formerly united to so lively an expression of intellect, and to such nobility of countenance, that the gaze of the spectator was rivetted upon her, almost against his will. The beautifully rounded cheeks are become wasted and sickly; and the paleness of the skin is scarcely to be distinguished from the white band which fastens her little nun's cap upon her head, her beautiful hair being entirely concealed. Her eyes are likewise changed; seeking nothing without, and finding nothing within which could kindle their former light, they retain only the expression of a pure and exalted soul.

Her eyes wandered from Margaret to the old man, and from him back again to his weeping daughter, sympathizing in her grief, not

only from compassion, but from consciousness of the great loss which she also had sustained in the good old man, who had endeavoured by unobtrusive kindness to alleviate the harshness of her situation. He had often led her at night through secret passages to the forbidden air: she now saw before her an existence little different to that in a prison, and which, to one so accustomed to freedom and exercise, threatened the injury of her health. She resigned herself to the future: one by one her hopes of deliverance had faded away, and she tried to banish all idea of it far from her. She lived only in the remembrance of her former happiness, thus nourishing the deep grief of her bosom till it grew, as it were, into a poisonous tree, under the widely-spreading branches of which the youthful energies of her life faded and were buried. She appeared to have grown old in the castle: it seemed long to her since she was young: she knew that she had once been so; but between her earlier existence and her present one was an abyss, out of which she seemed to have arisen like a fabled spirit, neither alive nor dead.

She had not that consolation which many a shipwrecked wanderer in life possesses, of being able to conquer the remembrance of the past by activity, and by the undisturbed devotion of a pure religion. The greatest of her afflictions was the constraint laid upon her by her residence with persons who endeavoured to engage her in senseless and unintellectual employments; and whose religion confirmed, on a nearer acquaintance, the aversion which she had felt towards it during Father John's efforts to convert her.

The hatred roused in the heart of Lady Somerset by the sight of her, because she bore the beautiful features of the sister of Buckingham—he who had supplanted her husband as favourite of the king, and thus made her his deadly enemy: this hatred was every moment more apparent. It vented itself with malicious triumph upon his innocent niece. Even the humiliating measures pursued against the poor girl appeared to her too mild; as she was resolved that Buckingham should never see his projects for her realized, even should her persecutor proceed to the worst, and let her fade gently out of existence.

Father John, who perfectly understood his penitent, although her confession was made to him only so far as it suited her, tried at first to protect his pupil from Lady Somerset's persecutions. He was instigated to this by the hope of the fresh glory he should acquire by her conversion; but when he found that his efforts were unavailing, his anger rose in proportion, and his acute mistress, taking advantage of his discomfiture, placed new restrictions upon the poor girl. These increased to such a degree, that every trifling convenience, every mental employment, every means for the refreshment of her body—all were withdrawn from her; whilst Lady Somerset sought, by the most cruel reproaches, to complete the humiliation of her mind and the affliction of her heart.

At first Mary opposed all this with youthful courage, and with the pride of her noble birth; reconciling herself to them in such a manner, that her tyrant doubted whether she really could break her spirit. But when the activity of her mind was at length suppressed, and when the deprivation of air and exercise had broken her health, then the traces of her misery became apparent in her features, and her tormentors, seeing the consequences of their efforts, continued them accordingly.

Mary no longer inhabited the beautiful rooms which Father Clement had ordered to be prepared for her: an empty chamber, situated in a turret overhanging the sea, was appointed for her abode. It contained only a bed, a prayer-desk, and a press in which she kept her nun's dress, and the little bundle she had brought with her. She was not allowed to have any books or writing materials. Early in the morning she was aroused from her hard couch by the ringing of a bell, which hung near her room, summoning the inhabitants of the castle to early mass: its sound seemed to shake the tower, which was joined to the oldest portion of the building, and was supported only by a small pilaster, under the lower window.

She was received in the hall by reproaches of her heresy, and of the lukewarmness of her devotion; and accompanied the party into the vault, which, being the church of these fanatics, was ornamented with all the brilliancy of the Catholic worship. This really pro-

duced a beneficial effect on Mary's feelings, for her heart could here raise itself to heaven in its own language ; and the beauty of the place contrasting with the gloominess of the rest of the castle, hushed the discord which took possession of her heart during the remainder of the day. She returned with a sigh to the light of heaven, for she could not then separate herself from all around, and was obliged to join them in sewing and listening to the conversation, always upon disgusting subjects. At dinner she sat at a separate table, in order to prevent her disturbing the reverend ladies, during their time of refreshment, by her unholy and heretical presence. During this meal Lady Somerset assailed her with speeches of contempt and hatred ; and when tears of grief appeared on the pale face of her victim, she increased the bitterness of her words in certainty of the consequences. Late in the evening, Mary withdrew to the tower, which, notwithstanding its bare walls and inhospitable arrangements, appeared to her a place of freedom and peace.

She often sat in the little narrow window, looking for hours upon the melancholy roaring sea, while, in the lassitude of her feeling, she prayed for patience and strength. Then came secretly the consolation which she was not permitted to receive openly—the appearance of Miklas and his daughter : both poured into the forlorn heart of the sufferer a love and commiseration which she met with from no one else. It was Miklas who, of his own will, procured for this languishing creature the blessing of fresh air. On the landing-place of this tower was an invisible door, which opened upon a narrow staircase, unknown perhaps to all but Miklas. At the foot of these stairs was a narrow, covered passage, leading from the old fortress, of which this tower formed a part, to the ancient ditch of the castle, which, being dried up and now used as a pasture, afforded a pleasant walk for the lady ; for the high banks on each side protected her from the wind, and from the inclemency of the season.

Mary's gratitude to Miklas for this indulgence, which unfortunately they dared not often repeat, was unbounded. At other times she cheered her mind by conversing with Margaret, who was attached to her with her whole heart, and who disclosed her own little troubles ; for Lanci was sent for to his uncle in London, and the

innocent meetings of the two lovers had thereby come to an end. Mary was, therefore, deeply grieved on learning that Miklas was seized with a dangerous fever ; and overpowered by the thought of what Margaret must suffer, she ventured upon her first request to Lady Somerset—that of allowing her to share with his daughter the cares which the old man required. The lady's eagle eye rested on the suppliant with an expression of malicious joy ; and she consented with a smile, as Mary had already been selected to undertake this office, in the hope of the fever being contagious and malignant.

She hastened kindly and fearlessly to her old friend ; but he no longer recognised her, and Mary had soon no doubt of the event for which she must prepare Margaret. This thought took such complete possession of her mind, that she almost overlooked herself ; and it was while sitting by the corpse that she first recollected with deep grief what a loss she had sustained in the death of the old man.

On the day to which we allude, a small party of men entered the little town of Boghall, which stood near the castle of the Lady Somerset. The weariness of their horses proved that their powers had not been spared ; and the inquiring looks which they cast on the miserable houses showed that they were seeking for an inn, of which both riders and horses stood in need. There was, as in every village or town, a small inn: the "White Lamb," as it was called, though not supported by strangers, excelled both in external appearance and internal arrangements the slight expectations which the horsemen had formed.

Master Harford, the landlord, appeared with great gravity at the door of the house, so soon as the tramp of horses announced the arrival of guests, studying the travellers from under his thick eyebrows, while he already guessed their wants, and shouted his commands from time to time into the house. Thus the travellers found the entrance filled with servants, the female portion of them being headed by a woman, whose cleanly and cheerful appearance was the greatest recommendation to the inn. The riders at once dismounted ; and Master Harford silyly endeavoured to ascertain their respective rank, for their plain clothing made no apparent distinction between them

A dispute between him and his wife was the result of these remarks ; for Mistress Harford thought the older man the highest in the rank of the party, and laughed at her husband's want of penetration in considering the younger one of the most importance : grounding her own opinion on the fact that the younger had hastened from his horse, and respectfully assisted his companion to dismount.

"Woman," cried the landlord of the Lamb, "I know this distinguished person better than you. He does not betray his rank now, because there is no one of his own class with him whom he may delight in annoying. People who are very condescending to their inferiors, when nobody of their own rank sees them, are always the most haughty to their equals. Certainly, he assisted the old man from his horse, but he went into the house first ; and he did not trouble himself about the baggage, while the old gentleman stopped to take some of it with him."

"And the handsome page," said the landlady ; "does your wisdom tell you whether he be of noble or of common blood?"

"Noble or not," answered the landlord, "they have all stomachs, and are hungry ; and your place is in the kitchen."

So saying, he took his lantern and his bunch of keys, and disappeared through a door leading to the well-filled cellar, thus escaping the reproachful words of his offended wife, who would indeed have received a well-deserved scolding had she delayed attending to her kitchen affairs, which she superintended in great perfection.

The travellers found to their joy a light and comfortable room, where a fire was blazing in the grate, and where preparations were already making for a dinner which showed a tolerable acquaintance with the luxuries of the table ; completed by the production of several dusty, sealed bottles, which were set upon the table with great care by Master Harford himself.

A short pause, during which the servants were busied in preparations for the dinner, afforded the travellers an opportunity for an interchange of their thoughts.

"Now my lord," said Brixton to Richmond, who, lost in a melancholy stupor, was staring at the fire—"now, when we are near the

end of our journey, I see with regret a change in your temper, which, pardon me, leads me to fear that you have found obstacles in yourself which you had not before discovered, or that you perceive difficulties which have escaped me."

"Do not fear this, dear sir," answered Richmond, rousing himself, and looking kindly towards him; "neither a doubt, nor the slightest change in my resolution of standing by you at any price in this affair, has taken place in my mind. On the contrary, being so near the end, I feel more vividly than before how necessary it is that our object should be attained. There is, however, one doubt concerning the management of the affair, which is forced upon us by an unknown counsellor; and my disposition is such that I am fearful of my own behaviour. My inclination to follow the directions of this handwriting is strengthened by your compliance, dear sir, for you certainly are able to judge whether this plan is to be preferred to an open and just arrangement, which I always think the best."

Brixton listened thoughtfully to these words, and appeared once more to be reflecting upon the circumstances.

"My lord," said he, "my perception is not so clear as you think; I have confessed this before. I repeat it, that I do not know to what discoveries the death of this lady's protectors may have given rise. Whether truth or deception lead to her persecution—whether gallantry, or a design grounded on secret information, guided Lord Membroke, I know not. Certainly parties have been at work who are more cunning and more powerful than he is, and in their power we must conclude she is."

"The obstinate silence of this young man is remarkable," said Richmond. "I put trust in him; and yet he will not tell us who sent him to us. What can be the motive of all this? I should a thousand times have supposed that we were enticed here in order to be drawn from the right scent; but I cannot doubt the tales which the boy, in the innocence of his heart, and in the unconstrained freedom of his speech, relates to us, and which contain such credible information of the lady, that we cannot avoid finding her if we follow him; unless, which God forbid, her persecutors have taken her further away."

"I quite agree with you," answered Brixton. "I cannot doubt the boy's honesty: his own tender desire to see this Margaret, whom he calls his love, cannot be hypocrisy, and agrees perfectly with all his other statements. I must also confess that his childish way of keeping secrets, which betrays all he would conceal respecting the mysteries of this castle, gives me a foreboding of a new enemy for the poor lady."

"You mean," replied Richmond, "that the inhabitants of this castle are Catholics?"

"Have I said that?" said a voice of surprise; and Lanci, who had entered noiselessly, and had overheard these last words, stood before them, glowing with fright.

"You have often betrayed it, though you have never actually said so," remarked Brixton, quietly; "but do not be uneasy—it shall not go further than ourselves."

"I am sorry if I have betrayed it," cried Lanci; "you will not make me so unhappy as to talk about it. But I must tell you that all in this house are watching us. The landlord wanted me to tell him which is the noblest of you two; and said that if I told him he would give me cakes and apples, just like a monkey. I ran away and said—forgive me, my lord—that we were none of us noble."

Richmond and Brixton could not suppress a smile, which was increased when the boy added,

"But it is time that we decide how the poor lady is to be got away: I think I must be the forerunner."

"I will accompany you," interrupted Richmond, quickly: "the step that is to be taken is too important to be trusted to your prudence: Master Brixton may here take some repose, until we bring him news that his presence is required."

The boy was silent. After a moment, he looked up at both gentlemen, and shook his head.

"Well, Lanci," said Richmond, "does not my plan please you?"

"I must tell a falsehood if I say yes: I wish that both would remain here, and not that any one should go with me now."

"And why?" asked Richmond: "be open, my child: we wish to hear what you will contrive, for you have shown yourself faithful and clever."

"See, my lord," said he, "I think that I must not go any further to-day. It is Friday: to-morrow morning early the ranger will carry the game for the Sunday into the castle kitchen. I must be near him: it is the only way in which I or my letter can gain admission. Meanwhile, you must follow me, in order that you may be ready for the propositions which Father Miklas will make, and which I do not know. I see now where I am; and I should have done better, had I let our horses hunger a day longer, instead of bringing you here,"

"What disquiets you here?" asked Richmond; "do you think it possible that we are watched from the castle?"

"Yes, I think so. The old ranger often told me of an inn which was visited by the Catholics (for now you know they are so) who wish to go to the castle. It is this one: I have seen the sign, the "White Lamb." The ranger did not know it was in the town: he always said it was among the hills."

"And do you think these people are in the pay of the castle, and that they give them notice of the strangers who come here?"

"Yes, the ranger said so: he knows best."

"Then let us go quickly," said Richmond: "we can deceive them as to the road we take, and in that way can disappoint them as to their intelligence."

Brixton rose to show his readiness, when the doors opened, and the servants entered with the dinner, preceded by the landlord with a napkin in his hand; and the two guests drew their chairs to the table.

One look betrayed the sentiments of each to the other. In order to avoid attracting any attention, they applied themselves to their dinner. Richmond said to himself that the horses must need repose, without which any further undertaking would bring danger.

They had scarcely seated themselves, when the tramp of horses was heard approaching the inn, and the landlord, after a hasty glance from the window, hastened to welcome the new comer.

Those in the room heard him exchange a friendly and respectful greeting with the stranger, and a tolerably long conversation took place in the hall. Footsteps were then heard on the stairs, and, the landlord entering, followed by the new guest, begged permission for him to join them at dinner.

There was no time to object to this request, for the stranger stepped immediately into the room, and in polite terms claimed the hospitality of those present. That was coldly granted to him which could not be refused; and he took his place very comfortably on the other side of the table, where he found sufficient employment in satisfying his appetite, although this did not prevent his piercing little eyes from scanning his companions. When, in order to obtain breath, he loosened his cravat for a moment, he said, bowing to those present,

"It is rare to meet with such honourable guests at this table. This country is not much visited, for but little trade is carried on, and the proximity of the harbour of Dover attracts all strangers of consequence thither."

This observation remained a short time unanswered. At last Richmond, turning partly to the landlord, and partly to the stranger, inquired,

"How far is it to Dover, and which is the way thither?"

"If you wish to go to Dover," answered the stranger, "I am surprised that you have taken such a very round-about way; since, as I guess by your dress, you have come hither from London."

"Every one does not take the shortest route," replied Richmond. "Dover will now be lively, since the Princess of Wales lands there."

"There will be but little festivity," said the stranger, thoughtfully: "the general mourning prevents it."

"The general mourning," cried Brixton: "what do you mean, sir? Is this country in mourning?"

"When did you leave London, worthy gentlemen, that you do not know of the king's death?"

"The king's death!" cried both, with one voice.

"And when did he die?" asked Richmond.

"On the evening of the eighth of this month," replied the stranger.

"The day of our departure," said Brixton, mechanically.

"I left the next morning," answered the stranger, "and travelled somewhat more quickly than you. People of business, like myself, who generally spend the most of their life in travelling, are better acquainted with all the methods which can shorten a long journey."

These words were not answered; for Richmond, as well as Brixton, was agitated by the news which they had heard.

Guessing their thoughts, the stranger continued:—"The lamentation in London was great and general. Long as the people had been prepared for the event, it appeared as if the king had been taken away in youth, and in the fullness of strength. But it is always so: that which people have possessed for a long time they think they can never lose. Those who now weep and groan for him, spoke but a short time since most criminally respecting his extended life; and now that the end of his life is come, they shudder at the new prospects of the throne, and see phantoms everywhere."

"Fools always do that, at all times and in all circumstances," said Richmond, indifferently: "the voice of the people was otherwise concerning James, and the hopes respecting his successor are not to be scared away by phantoms which are only perceived by children and fools."

"Well, well," answered the stranger, with cast-down eyes, and cutting a large slice of ham; "but this marriage—this unhappy marriage. She may be a good lady, this Queen of England, this French princess, a Papist by birth and education. She is still a hated Catholic; and it is not advantageous for her to ascend the throne, believe me, sir."

"I neither believe you," said Richmond, proudly, "nor do I think it becoming to criticise the wife of my king. Her creed is an affair of her own heart; and poison must not be spread abroad by idle prattle. I hate suppositions as much as I hate wickedness."

He rose at these words, and, bowing respectfully to Brixton, left the room ; for he had missed Lanci ever since the stranger's entrance, and he wished to arrange their departure. Lanci was, however, not to be found ; and he heard from his servants that he had mounted his horse after a hasty meal, and had departed through the back gate.

When Richmond was about to return to the dining-room, his servant approached him, and he soon perceived that he wished to speak to him alone. Stepping back into the court, the servant related to him what Lanci had told him—that he must hasten to reach the castle before the stranger ; for were the latter to arrive there first, with the news of the presence of such distinguished strangers, it would be quite impossible to obtain admission.

“ I tell your lordship of this,” added the attendant, “ in order to warn you of the stranger. At the same time, you must make him think that you wish to remain, and then perhaps he will delay his departure in order to watch you. Lanci told the people in the house that he had left part of our baggage at the last inn, and that he must hasten to procure it before the gentlemen miss it.”

Richmond immediately understood Lanci's conduct ; and the disagreeable impression which the stranger had made upon him was now fully confirmed. He fancied he could recognise in him the chaplain of the castle ; of whose wicked authority Lanci had betrayed so much, that he regarded him as an enemy and persecutor of the unhappy Lady Mary. It seemed to him, in the first agitation which this produced, nearly impossible to meet the stranger again ; and hastening to his sleeping-room, he desired that Master Brixton might be informed he was there.

After he had communicated all that he had learned, they resolved to wait for the young man's further directions ; for it was certain that they must take no step during the presence of Father John which could in any way draw his attention towards them.

Painful as this situation was, especially for Richmond's warm temper, he resolved to maintain the appearance of calmness, in order to deceive the father, and to detain him through the following day : whether he should be able to wait any longer, he could not promise.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

From the moment in which Miklas was carried to the grave, Mary felt a weakness in her limbs which rendered her incapable of walking without assistance. Electa, who, though glowing with bigotry and fanaticism, was still compassionate towards her, led the half-fainting girl up the staircase which conducted to the turret-room, for Margaret was lying upon the bed absorbed in grief, and unmindful of her beloved lady who so much needed her aid.

Electa, who had never until now visited the chamber of the persecuted Mary, could hardly suppress her astonishment at the sight which it presented. The hard couch was standing near a window, exposed to the biting wind which blew from over the sea; and every article of furniture which could contribute to her comfort was wanting. Electa laid her burden upon the miserable bed, and, taking off her veil, hung it before the window. She found a little water in an earthen pitcher, and sprinkling it upon Mary, succeeded in rousing her. At last the patient opened her eyes, and, looking at Electa's kind face, she said gently,

"You here? What has happened?" and she burst into tears, which seemed in some measure to give relief to her heavy heart.

"What is the matter with you?" said Electa: "shall I undress you, and help you to bed?"

"Dear Electa," answered Mary, "consider what you are doing. They do not like that any one should attend upon me, and I do not wish to bring a reproach upon you. Leave me; God will give me strength, unless His will purposes otherwise."

Electa cast down her eyes: she felt ashamed of the situation of this poor creature, with whom she could not be angry, although she disapproved of her perversity of mind; and she felt that to render some assistance in her weakness was a kindness she ought to show her.

"I doubt not," said she, gaining courage, "that our reverend superior will allow me to remain with you : I will go and ask her permission."

Mary felt too weak for opposition : but she was scarcely alone, before the fearful fever assailed her, and her brain was filled with frightful images. She lay groaning and powerless, and delirium seized her, without Electa or any one near to help her. The night was already far advanced, and the violence of the fever had abated, when a wild howl was heard near the door of the room. Even in her confusion of mind she recognised the horrible sound which so often disturbed the inhabitants of the castle, and which was caused by the crazy Lady Somerset. A cry of horror broke from Mary's lips when she saw the door open, and the lady enter, carrying a branched candlestick, with two wax tapers in it. Slowly she approached the sick girl, and holding the candle over the couch, fixed her staring eyes on the victim of her fury.

"I am come to take care of you myself," cried she, in a jeering tone ; " for I have shut up Electa. Yes, you will soon recover, if you take some of my medicine!"

A frightful laugh followed these words ; she set the candlestick upon the ground, and rubbed her hands in anguish.

"It was medicine!" said she, looking up suddenly, and staring beyond Mary, as if addressing some one else. "I tell you, it was medicine that I sent to Overbury—not poison ! not poison ! No, no—not poison !"

She repeated these last words several times, and, looking upon the ground, seemed to have forgotten everything else ; while she trembled so fearfully, that her limbs seemed to rattle : then suddenly changing her tone, she exclaimed, looking at Mary,

"But you—you shall atone for it ! Buckingham now fills the place of which they deprived my Somerset. Duke ! duke ! shall the boy Villiers be duke, like my husband, and am I not to avenge him ? Have I not you safe ?—you upon whom he builds so much ? Never shall you see them again. The world calls me a poisoner—a murderer : I will deserve the name : I will deserve it, by means of you!"

Saying these words she flew to Mary, and grasped her throat in all the fury of madness. The unfortunate girl, overcome by fright, had not moved a limb during this fearful scene; but now that she felt herself in the power of this terrible woman, her strength was roused, and she tore herself from her grasp. When Lady Somerset had overcome her first astonishment at meeting with opposition, her rage was redoubled, and she again seized Mary. This time she did not find much resistance, for the head of the invalid had become hot and heavy, and every object danced before her eyes: however, she made one effort to free herself; but her frame trembled, and, falling to the ground, together with her persecutor, she extinguished the candle which the latter held in her hand.

The darkness which suddenly reigned changed the scene: the lady appeared to forget Mary, now that she could no longer see her, and losing her from her grasp, rose from the ground.

"Where are you, Somerset?" said she, gently: "speak, my husband: where shall I find thee? Why dost thou wander about alone during the night? Overbury did not die of poison! Thou, thou, at least, art innocent. I seek thee—thou must not die without absolution. Come into thy room—do not die on the staircase, before the church has forgiven thee. His corpse! his corpse!" cried she, suddenly, as her foot touched Mary, who was still lying on the floor; and she rushed out of the room, the door of which opened at that moment, admitting the light of a lamp. The furious woman rushed on, and did not stop until she had reached the landing-place at the bottom of the stairs.

Margaret now entered the little room. In the weariness which followed her grief, she had thought of the lady, and stole quietly along the passages to her who was now her only consolation. She found her pale as death; her clothes torn, and her forehead bleeding. Margaret feared that the frightful woman had strangled her, and her grief at this idea almost overpowered her senses; but she soon regained her self-possession; and knowing that there was no help near, she sought for means to save her friend. She laid her upon the bed, washed the blood from her forehead, and bound up a wound which she now perceived, and which had been caused

which the game had been covered so completely over it, as almost to conceal the boy. He then crossed the court towards the window, which Margaret opened ready to greet him.

"Poor girl," said he, "you can scarcely weep too much for the loss of ^{so} good a man as your father. You are badly off now, poor thing! You cannot remain in this old owl's nest without some protection," added he, glancing round the court, to see if any one were watching them.

"Ah," said Margaret, sobbing, "I am worse off than you think cannot you give me some advice."

"Ha, Godfrey," called he to the cook, "make me some hot spiced soup, for it is cold this morning; and I will come for it when I have comforted this girl."

"Very well," answered he, "if you wish for something to refresh you, come in: it is not cold by the fire," and he went away, taking his two heavily-laden boys with him.

Margaret, whose tears had ceased to flow at the thought of the ranger's advising her about the lady, was now much surprised at hearing the boy who was with him sob violently.

"What is the matter with your boy, godfather? He is weeping. Did he know my father?"

"I should think so," said the ranger, drily; and taking the basket and hide away, he placed his hand over Margaret's mouth; for she was on the point of crying out upon recognising Lanci.

"Be silent, both of you, or I shall separate you again," said the ranger, concealing his emotion and feigning to be angry. "Are you going to bring the whole castle here with your shrieking, stupid girl? And you—leave off that howling!" he added, turning to Lanci, who had climbed up to the window, and was now embracing Margaret. "You must not play the girl, but act like a man;" and he-good-humouredly placed himself before them, so as to hide them from the sight of those who might pass through the castle court.

"Oh, Margaret!" cried Lanci; "was our good old father angry with me when he died?"

"He did not know any one, Lanci: he did not even bestow upon me his blessing: but when he was alive, he often talked of you.

He loved you ; and said that uncle Porter would make all right between us."

"Did he say so?" cried Lanci, joyfully. "Then do all that uncle Porter commands you, and follow me with your lady : we have all ready."

"Great God, Lanci ! are you quite crazy ? How can we get out here, for the lady orders every one to be watched ?"

"Be quiet," answered Lanci ; "our plan is destroyed since your good father is not here to give us advice and aid. But we must go, and before Father John returns : he is already arrived at the little town there."

"Now then, God be gracious to us if he is already in the town. Lanci, we cannot go so soon, even if the doors stood open, and no one would prevent us."

"Do you hear?" cried Lanci, angrily, to the ranger ; "did I not tell you that the girl would not go—that she likes the old castle better than she does me ? But," he added, turning to her, "the lady shall go : this is all planned for her sake."

"If you would listen to what those who know have to tell you, you would not speak so of me : it is the lady who prevents this, for she is dangerously ill."

"Great God ! what a misfortune!" cried Lanci. "The poor lady ! what is the matter with her ? Surely she will not die. Where is she ? May I go to her ?"

"Alas ! I do not know how to answer all your questions. If you could but remain here and help me ! Only think ; she lies in the little turret by the sea ; she has a hard couch, no fire, no physician ; and last night the old lady tried to strangle her, but I discovered it, and saved her. Ah ! if you could but see her ! No one would know the beautiful lady, these people have treated her so cruelly."

Even the ranger testified his compassion by gestures ; and Lanci said, in a tone of disappointment,

"What shall we do ? She will certainly die if she be left here ; and what will the gentlemen say ? Ranger, speak ; advise us what to do."

Listen," said the old man; "things look badly, and it seems to me that there is not much to be done. I leave Lanci here now, and I will stay in the kitchen until noon. Meanwhile, Margaret, take him to the lady, that he may tell her how the matter stands. She will then be able to judge. Besides, a little hope often does as much good as medicine. Now go, gently and carefully, and do not talk unnecessarily. I cannot remain longer than noon."

The young people were ready to obey; and they knew that if they could but pass through the hall in safety, there would be nothing further to fear. They therefore set forth to make the trial, while the ranger crossed the court to that part of the building in which was the kitchen, where the cook received him gladly, and bade him sit down by the fire.

Margaret and Lanci crossed the hall without being discovered, and hastened along the passages to the little tower. They were favoured by the condition of Lady Somerset, which required quiet throughout the castle; and they arrived in safety at the door of Mary's room, which Margaret found as she had left it.

"Now let me go in first," said the girl; "the sight of you will perhaps alarm her;" and taking the basket and coverlet which Lanci carried, she glided gently into the room. The poor invalid lay in the same position, with the same staring look as when Margaret left her.

"Alas, dear lady, are you still so ill? Are you not a little better?"

The attempt to answer failed as before, and her nurse perceived that no news could do good. She spread the warm coverlet upon her; and then, kindling a fire with the turf which she had brought, she put her little saucepan upon it, and made the invalid a warm drink. To her unspeakable delight, the lady, after having partaken of it severaltimes, seemed to revive: her features became less rigid; and she at length uttered the words, "good Margaret." After this, her eyelids sank down, her breathing became more easy, and sleep stole upon the poor sufferer.

The young nurse sat down by the fire, which she tended so well that the room soon became quite warm; she looked with longiag

eyes towards the door, wishing to open it, but afraid of awakening her charge. She controlled herself for some time, but, at length, the lady seemed in so sound a sleep, that she did not fear her being disturbed; and she remembered that she must be aroused soon, in order to hear Lanci's news, and to decide what was to be done. Therefore she gently opened the door, and Lanci stole in. Both sat down near the fire, and gazed upon each other, mute with happiness.

They first spoke of Miklas, and their tears flowed together at the remembrance of the good old man. But sorrow cannot long continue in hearts that are filled with love. Every place which unites two loving ones, be it the last plank of the foundering vessel, be it the deepest vault of the prison—that place is to them redolent with happiness; for they are in each other's presence, careless of all around, and breathing an atmosphere of peace and joy.

The young couple continued in a conversation so earnest, that all save themselves were entirely forgotten, until they heard a gentle noise, followed by the words,

“Where am I? Margaret, are you here? Who is with me?”

Both sprang up, and Margaret flew to the bed. Lady Mary was sitting upright, and looking inquiringly at the girl.

“Dear lady! God be praised that you are better: you can even speak and move. Are you better?”

“Better, dear child, though not well: I am weak. I thank you for your trouble in bringing me out of the frightful state into which the lady had caused me to fall. But have they allowed you to come to me? And how shall I be safe against that woman, the sight of whom I fear more than death? Tell me, are we alone? Is there not some one behind you?”

Margaret stepped aside, and showed Lanci, who had hidden himself on his knees behind her.

“Do not be angry with him, dear lady: he means well, and will save us both.”

“Lanci, have you come from London? Poor child! you have arrived at a sorrowful time: Margaret and I have lost our protector.”

"Yes, lady," said Lanci, still kneeling, and overcome by sorrow at seeing her thus—"yes, much that is sorrowful has happened; but if God has taken away one protector, he has also given you another, who will try all means to get you away."

Lady Mary was silent for a moment, and looked thoughtfully at him: then she said, despondingly,

"None of those who formerly protected me know that I am a prisoner, good Lanci, and who else will take pity upon me?"

"Yet," said Margaret, hastily, and drawing Lanci towards the bed, beside which they both knelt before her—"yet they are old friends of yours, dear lady."

"Is it not true," said Lanci, smiling, "that Master Brixton is an old friend of yours?"

"Brixton!" cried Mary; and surprise brought back the colour which had so long left her cheeks. "My tutor! my friend! my second father!"

"Yes, lady," cried Lanci, "he is near you, and is ready to assist you in your flight, as soon as you are well enough to make the attempt."

"Well enough?" cried Mary, as if asking herself whether she could be ill after receiving such information. "I am well—well enough to endeavour to escape from this prison. Rise, children: let me try my strength; it will not forsake me, now that I so much need it."

She threw aside the covering, and stood, in her nun's dress, before the astonished Lanci. But this sudden strength, which was merely the result of a momentary effort of her strong mind, soon passed away; her head became giddy, and she sank back on her couch. The young people looked anxiously at each other; and Mary, perceiving this, took Margaret's arm, and endeavoured to sit up, at the same time addressing herself to Lanci.

"Speak, my child; you must have much to tell me. Did he send me no token? Have you not a few lines for me?"

"No, dear lady; I was obliged to leave the place where we rested without his knowing it, in order that I might arrive here before your enemy. Father John is at A——; and if he had seen

me, there would have been an end to our plan. So I came here in order to tell you, and in the hope of bringing you away before he arrives at the castle."

"Alas!" cried Mary, "why does my strength forsake me, when it is so necessary to enable me to escape from this prison? The lady will soon miss me; and when she knows that I am ill, I shall be watched more strictly than ever. But why does not Master Brixton ask the lady to give me up? She dare not keep me when she knows that he has a right to me."

"No, no, dear lady, that they must not do: it would only make matters so much the worse. One, who arranged everything, and whom we all obey, because he understands the affair best, has forbidden it."

"And who is this person?" asked Mary.

"I must not tell his name, dear lady: do not ask me. He intends to do you good, and I am his messenger: you will trust me?"

"If Brixton trust you," said Mary, "so also will I: I cannot doubt you. Yet how can I get out? How is it to be accomplished?"

This question remained unanswered; for a step was heard in the passage, which filled all with affright. What was to be done? for if Lanci were discovered, he would certainly be driven out of the castle. The room had only one door; there was no corner where he could hide himself; and they looked at each other in dismay. At last Mary pointed to Sister Electa's veil, which still hung in front of the window, and Lanci glided behind it just as a knock was heard at the door.

Mary lay down upon the bed, and Margaret hastened to open the door, for any delay would have caused suspicion. She nearly started back when Father John entered, casting a scrutinizing glance around the room.

"I meet with none but invalids," said he, approaching Mary's bed: "there is truly great disorder everywhere. One cannot be absent without repenting it. Well, what is the matter? Mere fancy, or woman's artifices? They are always found out."

Mary was at first so overcome by fright, that she could not speak ; but her pride rose within her, and, after a few moments, she answered in a firm voice,

"Father John, I believe you have learnt enough of me to know that I am not capable of trying to deceive you."

"Oh," cried Margaret, gaining courage, "reverend sir, do not think that she is deceiving you. The poor lady was nearly dying last night : her limbs were quite stiff, and she was speechless ; and if I had not come, her ladyship would have strangled her. Her head was bleeding from her fall, for the old lady threw her down."

"Silence !" exclaimed the father ; "who asked you ? How came you here ? Who gave you permission to take care of her ?"

"Her own affectionate and humane heart," cried Mary ; "for I, forsaken by all, was the object of the greatest ill-treatment. Have pity, and do not punish her because she saved my life. I will bear all you please to lay upon me, but do not hurt this poor girl."

Father John cast a sullen glance upon Margaret ; but he said nothing, as if resolved to reserve her share of blame, at least for the present. Turning to Mary, he took her hand, and silently felt her pulse.

"It is uneasy and feverish," said he, after a little time ; "but her illness is not dangerous : a little sea air will do her good. Arise, and prepare yourself for a short voyage. The wind will be favourable at noon, and then you shall leave this castle, which you so much hate. The voyage to France is shorter than you think," he added, insultingly, observing, with malicious joy, the deadly paleness which overspread her countenance.

"Good God !" cried Margaret, "the lady will die if she go upon the sea in her present state. Have compassion, reverend sir : she will die upon the way."

"Silence !" cried he, turning so furiously towards Margaret, that she drew back in terror. At the same moment, she entangled her foot in Electa's veil ; and now, doubly alarmed, she felt her knees tremble, and in a moment she fell upon the floor. This movement tore the veil from its fastening, and revealed to Father John a sight

which so filled him with astonishment, that he remained perfectly mute. He turned his eyes from Mary to Lanci and Margaret; and surprise, rage, and joy appeared in his face; whilst Lanci assisted Margaret to rise, without bestowing the slightest attention upon the father.

All saw that the priest was ready to give vent to the feelings of anger and wrath caused by this occurrence; but doubtful how to express himself, he remained silent for a moment, letting his victims read in his face the prelude to what they might expect. Meanwhile Mary, who felt the humiliation of the scene, collected all her strength to conquer her fear; and raising herself from the couch, she said gravely,

"You need not, Father John, give expression to the anger which your countenance indicates that you feel. This young man has certainly been concealed from you; but you may thank yourself for it; for those whose actions are the most innocent are afraid of the construction which you put upon them. I tell you, nevertheless—"

"And I tell you," interrupted the enraged priest, "that I know enough of this boy, to perceive in what relation you stand to him; that all your machinations to deceive me are quite clear; and these will place you in a situation where you will bitterly repeat of them."

"Very well," said Lanci; "but you cannot detain me, for I am the ranger's boy. I do not belong to the castle; and I desire that you will let me go immediately, and without being hindered."

"Let you go!" roared Father John: "rather would I strangle you with my own hands than permit you to depart—you, the boy whom I trod underfoot by the bedside of your hypocritical uncle! Ha! If he has sent you here, then am I come in the right moment for discovering his treachery, and for destroying you all!"

"You will find that difficult," cried Lanci; and tearing himself free from Margaret, he pushed past the father, and escaped out of the room. Margaret instantly flew to the door, in order, by locking it, to gain time for Lanci. But her strength was not equal to that of the father; and Lady Mary, although she had risen from her couch, did not hasten to her aid; for she felt as if she would rather

bear the worst that could happen to her than struggle with that despicable man. Margaret was therefore soon overcome, and the father's cries only quickened Lanci's steps, but he was speedily caught by some of the attendants in the castle, and carried to a room used for those who had fallen under the displeasure of either the priest or the lady.

Margaret and Mary every instant expected the return of their tyrant; but hour after hour elapsed, and neither him nor any other person appeared. Noon was past, and both began to awake out of the stupor into which the recent occurrence had thrown them: Margaret's tears ceased to flow, and Mary calmly reflected upon her situation. Hope was not entirely dead within her: the knowledge of Brixton's being near prevented her giving way to despair, although she remembered the father's threat of carrying her across the sea. Suddenly Margaret stepped back from the window, against which she had been leaning, to announce the unwelcome intelligence that a little sailing-boat was visible in the bay below, and that Father John was in earnest conversation with the sailors.

"This design will be carried out, then," cried Mary, with renewed grief, "and I shall be torn away from my benefactor, and carried to a foreign land, where death or perpetual imprisonment awaits me, and where I shall be beyond the reach of those who love me. What a miserable fate is mine! Who am I, that strangers thus put forth their strength to persecute me, and to keep me in such frightful seclusion? Why do they not rather put me to death at once, than thus kill me by slow torments? Oh, Margaret! poor creature! what will become of you? Why did I implicate you and Lanci in my misfortunes?"

"Do not think of us, dear lady," cried Margaret, weeping: "think only whether we cannot find means of escape: help awaits us outside the castle."

"I cannot see that it is possible," said Mary, looking round; "you know that all the passages are guarded, and at this moment they are watching us closely. Besides, it is day; and even should they leave us till night, I know of but one way by which we could escape with safety."

" You mean by the ramparts, where my father so often took you to walk? Yes, I have thought of that a hundred times; but the key of that little iron door is in the hands of the new bailiff, who took even the gold that was in my father's purse."

" Then that plan is impracticable," said Mary; " and we will console ourselves with the thought that the success of it was doubtful, because the castle garden is on that side, and part of the wall is pulled down, so that we might be seen from thence."

" It is so," said Margaret. " But I believe no one besides my father knew of the passage which joined the moat to the castle; and we could certainly escape, had we but the key."

After some minutes' deep reflection, Mary, suddenly rising, observed,

" And yet, Margaret, we must attempt it. Let us try the door; what more can befall us, even if we are discovered? It cannot be worse than what they now intend; and who can hinder me from seeking to regain that freedom of which they have deprived me?"

She arose; but her physical strength was not equal to that of her mind: her head was even more oppressed than before, and her limbs were weak. However, she did not express what she felt, and attempted to follow Margaret, who was endeavouring to remove the stones and rubbish which lay before the little iron door. Lady Mary tried to assist her, but was obliged to desist, and to content herself with watching the passage lest any person should interrupt them. Once she ventured to a little projection in the gallery, from which, without being perceived, she could see the great staircase. She concluded, by the hasty movements of those below, that something unusual was going on; and soon Father John appeared, and, accompanied by a servant, hastily ascended the stairs.

" Why have they omitted to obey my directions?" said he, in a tone of anger: " did I not expressly command that both hands and feet should be bound?"

" Yes," answered the servant; " but who could resist the strength which the lady displayed? We all flew like chaff before the wind, when she sprang upon us; and who would have thought that she

would have run to the little staircase, where she was formerly afraid to go? It would be well if both master and mistress were in the same place."

At this moment the door closed behind him, and only one servant remained upon the stairs. Seized by an undefined fear, Mary concluded that the madness of the night before still continued to affect Lady Somerset; and that, while in this state, something had happened which reminded her of her husband. Mary guessed this by the mention of the staircase, the history of which she knew too well; and she hastened back to communicate to Margaret her thoughts, which afforded her some hope that the confusion in the castle would favour their escape, and perhaps Father John's attention was too much occupied at present to allow of the carrying out of his plan.

Margaret shared this hope; but still she was uneasy, for every effort to open the door had as yet been in vain.

"We will not allow our courage to fail," said Mary, "whilst any hope remains. Let us light the candle, and bring it here: perhaps, if we examine carefully, we shall discover how to open it."

Margaret hastened back to the turret-room, and during her absence, Mary ventured once more to her lurking-place. Quiet seemed restored in the castle; hall and staircase were empty; and all activity seemed confined to the rooms. She joyfully hastened back to Margaret: both examined the lock, but in vain. The door was too firmly closed to be opened in any other way than by the key; and both at last desisted from the attempt. When they returned to their room, they saw that evening was approaching; and they concluded that the events in the castle had so occupied Father John, that he had been obliged to defer their departure. To gain time appeared important, for they hoped that the ranger would hear all from the servants; and as he was in connexion with their protectors, perhaps their deliverance might after all be effected. They waited as patiently as lay in their power, endeavouring to keep alive hope in each other, although they felt their spirits becoming gradually more depressed. With the night came on a violent storm, and the sea broke in huge billows over the rocks at

the foot of the tower. Presently they saw the little boat slowly float to a part of the bay, about a hundred steps from the castle, which now hid it from their view.

They had begun to hope that the fury of the storm would hinder their departure for this night, when suddenly a knock was heard at the door; and upon opening it, Father John entered, accompanied by two servants, carrying warm cloaks, which the priest ordered the two unfortunate women to put on. Frightful as this moment was, they could not but remark that the priest's countenance was changed since they last saw him; that the expression of anger had passed away, and that he looked pale and uneasy.

"Make haste!" cried he: "there is no time to lose—the sea becomes rougher every minute. You can weep during the voyage," he added, as he turned to Margaret, who, wringing her hands, enveloped herself in one of the cloaks; while Mary, too proud to betray her feelings either by word or look, was performing the same office with perfect calmness, and did not allow her tyrant the triumph he had apparently expected, of seeing her a suppliant before him.

This disappointment increased his anger, and he left them no further time for their preparations, but hastened on, leaving the two women to follow with the servants through the uninhabited part of the castle; and descending a small narrow staircase, he opened a door which led into the open air. He waited here an instant, appearing to expect some person; and Mary had time to observe that they were upon a long path leading down to the sea. After standing here a few minutes, a gentle whistle was heard, which Father John answered; and presently two men advanced towards them from the beach.

After a short conversation with these persons, the females were ordered to follow them. Mary walked without any assistance; but Margaret, overcome with grief, was obliged to be supported by the two men.

"Circumstances have occurred which prevent me from accompanying you," said Father John. "Here are your guides, to whom you

must give unqualified obedience. They will provide you with necessities during the voyage; and after your landing, they will take you to the place where it is deemed advisable that you should remain at present. Nothing but strict compliance can alleviate your situation, and the least resistance will not only be without avail, but will render it worse."

If anything could equal Mary's despair, it was her displeasure at being treated in so insulting a manner. She turned proudly to the angry father, who would have mingled poison with his words had he had it in his power.

"Your advice is superfluous," said she, coldly. "All that I have suffered from you, and in this castle, was illegal and criminal; but I am powerless, and can only bestow upon you my contempt and hatred for the ill-treatment and tyranny of which I have been the victim. I must submit myself to your malicious will; but, before God and man, I protest against thus being forced to leave my native country. The consequences, to perceive which requires a higher power than you possess, lie upon you; for every hour brings you nearer to your end, which perhaps may arrive sooner than you imagine."

She stepped onward with perfect self-control, and with such dignity, that she quite overawed those around her, and caused the men to draw back; and even Father John, regarding her voice as that of a prophetess, stood still, as if paralyzed. After a moment had elapsed, he approached her, and was about to seize hold of her dress; but there was something in her quiet, calm, and dignified manner which restrained him; for he felt at the moment as though there was a sacredness in the very air she breathed.

Mary did not once look around, but proceeded steadily on to the place where the boat awaited them, without betraying any weakness, or desire for delay. Father John beckoned to the others to follow: he watched the progress of the little train, and a cold shudder came over him, as if he had seen a spirit. He tried to recal them, but the sounds died on his lips. A secret judgment appeared to hang over him. The moment was come in which his soul was struck as by lightning, unveiling to him the sin which dwelt there. Mary's

words had this effect upon him : he felt that he was consigning her to certain destruction ; but while his conscience smote him for such cruelty, he remembered that he was not only gratifying his own revenge, but placing it beyond the power of any other individual to acquire that fame which he had vainly hoped to gain by her conversion.

He thus endeavoured to stifle the pangs of remorse, and was about to return to the castle ; but he could not withdraw his eyes from his victims until they had disappeared behind the rock. He then breathed more freely, and was turning round to mount the stone steps leading to his place of destination, when it seemed to him as if he heard the report of a gun in the direction of the boat. At first he thought that he must be mistaken ; but presently the sound was repeated. Still the roaring of the sea made him uncertain ; till at length a third report, clearly that of fire-arms, convinced him that he was not mistaken. Trusting to his athletic strength, he delayed for a moment to hasten to the spot, where he now feared some attack had taken place, the success of which must bring certain destruction upon him.

In the meanwhile Lady Mary, whilst acutely feeling her hard, unmerited fate, knew how to obtain that trust and confidence which is an all-sufficient support, maintaining our strength, and associating us in spiritual intercourse with those from whom no pressure of the outward world can separate us. Under the gloomy clouds of the darkened sky, with which the dashing waters of the roaring sea appeared to be carrying on an angry conflict, the forlorn girl stepped forth. Her thoughts were venting themselves in prayer, and her head rested on her bosom in the attitude of resignation. The wind blew aside her veil, as if to let heaven and earth gaze on her pale but lovely face. Her companions followed, but at a distance ; as if they sympathized in the sorrow she was enduring, she felt abashed in the presence of a being who seemed to spread the magic of a heavenly atmosphere around her. Thus approaching at every step her miserable fate, her soul, undisturbed by fear and anxiety, became more and more elevated. The struggle with the world was at an end ; she felt alone ; but, at the same time looked

forward, with her whole soul, to the happy society of the good and pure beyond the grave.

Thus inwardly at peace, her sympathy with the world was awakened by the sound of two well-known voices, interchanging their woes, and in this companionship finding the best consolation for their saddened hearts. They were those of Margaret and Lanci.

"What!" cried Mary, looking back, "are you to be carried away with us? Do they think the ocean a safer prison than the castle? Poor boy! your faithful zeal for me has brought destruction on yourself; and I can do nothing but suffer, like you and Margaret, which will avail you but little. Brixton, my dear tutor, our disappearance will be sorrowful tidings for you."

"Ah, dear lady!" cried Lanci, "I would rather die with you and Margaret than remain separated from you, without being able to do anything to save you. Those who persecuted us did me a greater service than they expected or wished."

"God forbid," answered Mary, "that Brixton should be induced to follow our steps, which would endanger his safety. This," added she, "must be decided as God pleases: all will have an end, even my poor tutor's grief and sorrow for me."

They had now reached the spot whence the path led to the place of embarkation; and when she approached the fishermen's huts which lay scattered on the rocky coast, the conductor whom Father John had appointed, and who had led Lanci, stepped forward, desiring the lady to enter one of the little huts, from whose low window there streamed the blaze of a turf fire, which lighted the ill-furnished room into which they now followed their leader.

"Wait here a moment, till I see whether all be ready to embark," said he; "you may get a little warmth for the voyage: it will be needful."

He retired, placing the two sailors at the door to guard them. Mary sat down on a small stool by the fire, which the inmates relying upon the safety of their property from the wetness of the turf, had left unprotected. She had not long been seated, when she heard the noise of horses, and instantly a vehement but short

conversation on the outside of the hut. The door was forced, and a man, with great strength, flung back the sailors who, hung on him in order to obstruct his entrance. Mary sprang from her seat: an undefined foreboding agitated her. At the same moment Lanci rushed from a corner into the midst of the group, and, attacking one of the sailors, overthrew him. With great dexterity, he did the same to the other sailor; and, hurling him forward, enabled the other person to make use of this moment to draw his pistol; and while the sailor, who was only held off by Lanci, was preparing for another attack, the pistol was fired, and the sailor stretched upon the ground.

"Save yourself, my lady," cried the person, turning in the same moment to Mary, who, now recognising Lord Richmond, trembled so violently, that she involuntarily remained fixed to the same spot. "Take courage, and follow me," said he, gently, holding out his hand to her: "Brixton sends me: you will find him. For God's sake, trust me!"

He looked compassionately and anxiously at her. She raised her eyes to him, endeavoured to rise from her seat, and had nearly fallen, but he caught her. Her strength returned, and she gave him her cold, trembling hand. As he led her to the door, the sailor rushed upon him, calling for help, and in vain held back by Lanci.

"Back!" cried Richmond, drawing his pistol. "Back! or you share the fate of your comrade."

The care of the agitated Mary prevented the immediate execution of this threat, and the cry for help rung through the air as Richmond led her from the cottage.

"Lanci," cried he, leading her towards the wood, "you will find a horse there, which Lady Mary will permit you to share with her. You know the rock in the wood to the left of the road: hide yourselves there, while I hinder pursuit as long as possible. If you meet my servant, desire him to hasten to me; but pursue your road, of which he is ignorant."

At this moment Mary uttered a loud shriek, for the hand which Richmond held was struck by a heavy blow, causing her to relinquish her grasp, and she was seized and carried off with such

force, that she could make no resistance. The sky had become lighter; and Mary, who, her eyesight being dimmed by the light of the fire, had not seen the enemy on first coming out of the house, now recognised Father John. Looking back, she beheld Richmond seized by two men, against whose strength he struggled in vain. Every moment carried her further from him towards the shore, and her agony seemed almost beyond mortal endurance. Now the forms of the combatants disappeared in the gloom of the night, and, in despair, she wrestled with the man who bore her along. She heard a shout; and, a few minutes after, a voice called her name, and seemed to be approaching her. She answered it with a cry for help; but, at the same moment, amid fierce imprecations, she was forcibly wrapped in her cloak, and had scarcely room to breath. Her bearer now redoubled his efforts, and she heard the noise of the waves, while the sharp sea-wind, blowing the cloak tightly round her, convinced her that they had passed from behind the downs to the shore. This her conductor also knew, for he slackened his speed, and, at length, placing her upon the ground, desired her to proceed. When she felt the ground under her feet, Lady Mary threw back the cloak; and, looking hastily around, perceived that she was in a little corner formed by the cliffs, and about fifty paces from the sea and the rocking boat.

"I will not follow you," said she, in a firm tone, and turning to her leader: "I will use every resistance, and leave nothing untried, with help so near, to escape your will. But if you will mercifully save me from the fate which is prepared for me, and permit me to return to my protectors, no reward that you can ask will be too high for me to give."

"I knew what you are worth—I have it in my pocket; and by serving Father John, I shall get more than by obeying you, as you have neither house nor home, and I must first give up what I already have. Go, go; you will not succeed in your attempt. And as to the opposition you threaten, you shall see that my power reaches to some distance." Then holding a pistol to her, he added, "See! thus much are you worth, if you dare to cry out. I shall then throw you into the sea, and leave you to the ravens."

He whistled gently, and was immediately answered from the boat.

"Now," cried Mary, "God be gracious to me. If death be my fate, I have so much the less to fear. I will not yield: I fear not your pistol."

With a rapidity and strength which was possibly the excitement of fever, she tore herself from her guard; and, assisted by the great personal skill which her education had bestowed upon her, she climbed the stony cliff, near which she stood, and had nearly reached the top, when the pistol was fired, and she fell upon the sand. But the report gave her rescuers intimation of the direction in which she had been carried, which they had failed to discover in the darkness of the night.

Lord Richmond, strenuously assisted by the strength of Lanci, reached the top of the cliff, and threw himself down the rocky precipice, at the foot of which they saw the boat; and close by the water's edge they perceived the object of their pursuit, who, carrying Lady Mary in his arms, strove hastily to reach the boat. Richmond rushed furiously towards him, seized him, and striking him in the face with the discharged pistol which he held in his hand, he rescued Lady Mary from his grasp. The pain of the blows he had received, the exhaustion caused by his burden, and by his efforts in retaining her, compelled him to relinquish his prize to Lord Richmond, and he endeavoured to reach the boat before the discovery of her condition should increase the anger of her deliverer.

Alarmed by the lifeless state of the lady, who answered no question, and made no effort to assist him, Lord Richmond paid no attention to the fugitive, but hastened back by the way that he had come. But here he speedily encountered a fresh opponent. Attracted, like Richmond, by the sound of the pistols, Father John had reached the scene, and his eagle eye immediately saw the situation of affairs. Whilst, in a voice of thunder, he called back the flying sailor, he approached Lord Richmond, and they recognised each other as the companions of the preceding day.

"Stop, sir," said the father, seizing Richmond's arm, "our acquaintance of yesterday is not sufficient to allow of your inter-

ference in my affairs: therefore, go your way; and speedily, if I may advise you. But this lady remains with me: she is entrusted to my care."

"That remains to be decided, dishonourable priest, whether I leave her to you. I will defend her with the last drop of my blood."

And, without further noticing him, Richmond hastened on to the place he had left, as quickly as the lady, who was momentarily becoming weaker, would permit him; for his anxiety at the condition of his charge made him feel that the first thing necessary was assistance for her. But Father John was an enemy not easy to conquer, and Richmond had hardly proceeded a few steps, when Lanci sighed; for he heard the sound of the little horn which Father John carried at his neck, and which was a signal to the inhabitants of the huts to collect themselves. The storm had previously kept the greater part of them in their houses; but, attracted by the shots and the cries for help, curiosity had now brought them together. The sound of the well-known horn told them that their tyrant, in whose hands lay their humble fate, required their assistance, and dark forms pressed forward from all sides, calling upon their neighbours; while others, busily assisted by wives and children, ran to the huts to bring pine torches, which lay ready for the use of the fishermen.

Richmond saw the danger of his position, and was fearful of being compelled to lay down the lady, if no effective help arrived. Seizing the motionless body of the lady with his left arm, and taking his sword in his right hand, he tried to break through the group of men. But it was easy to disarm him who had only one arm with which to defend himself against the ten strong ones who, at Father John's command, pressed upon him; and he was overcome and his sword wrested from him in a few minutes. His spirit rose at thus being deprived of his only means of defence, and the fate which now threatened Lady Mary made his strength superhuman, and, clasping her firmly in his arms, he still hurled defiance at his opponents.

A clear voice was at this moment heard above the tumult; and

Lanci recognised it as that of Margaret, who came running, and frequently calling out some words which made the men immediately cease their assault upon Richmond.

"The soldiers! the soldiers from D—! Save yourselves, if you can!" cried the brave girl, rushing breathless to Richmond; who, during the momentary silence, heard the trampling of horses which promised his rescue.

"Ha!" cried Father John, springing forward like an enraged tiger: "who has done this? Whence comes this band of ruffians, and at this moment?"

The torches were now brought out of the huts; their blood-red light glared upon the wild features of the priest, who, suspecting treachery, darted forth a look of intense rage. Still protecting himself, and with somewhat increased hope, Richmond stretched out his arm as the priest approached.

"Beware!" he cried as loud as he could; "your hours are numbered. The death of the Duchess of Somerset is known, and the soldiers come to seize you and the castle in the name of the king."

All drew back at these words. Father John's look of rage and terror seemed to ask if the moment were really come which placed a limit to his long-exercised power; whilst the rude faces around him showed in the torchlight only an expression of fear of the well-known firmness of the soldiers, joined to an undefined idea of the incontestible power of the royal name. Father John saw the truth at one glance. He dared no longer reckon on their assistance; but his second thought was torture indeed. The castle no longer offered him safety: the boat—the raging sea, upon whose dangerous waves he had hoped but a moment before to launch the innocent victim to his offended vanity, was now his doubtful refuge, if, indeed, he reached it before the approaching soldiers could prevent him. But with the certainty that his doom was now fixed, came rage and despair; and, instead of flying, he threw himself upon Richmond.

"Must I yield!" he cried, with a frightful howl; "but you shall gain nothing by it, you obstinate woman."

With these words he drew a dagger from his bosom, with the in-

tention of thrusting it into Mary; but Richmond, ever watchful, letting her gently fall from his arms to the ground, and protected only by his cloak, pursued the priest.

"The soldiers! The soldiers!" cried several voices. The danger was at hand, and there was no time to be lost. The father thrust the crowd back with fury, and flew towards the shore, disappearing in the darkness of the night. Richmond thought not of following him, but returned to the crowd; where, by the torchlight, he found the lady lying upon the ground, with Margaret and Lanci standing by her. A loud cry from the former, who had raised Mary's veil, attracted the attention of all.

"She is dead!" she cried; "she is bathed in blood! he has wounded her!"

"Impossible!" cried Richmond. But how could he doubt it, when he saw her beautiful form covered with blood, and the hue of death upon her lips and cheeks? He remained fixed to the spot, and speechless; his manly heart struggling with a feeling hitherto unknown to him. Unconscious of all that was passing around him, every faculty seemed paralyzed at the idea of Mary's death. At length, some one tried to move her, and he awoke from his stupefaction.

"Touch her not!" he cried, throwing himself violently upon a person who had approached unnoticed. "No one must touch her! No one!"

Again he stood and gazed upon her, while the expression of his features changed as if years had passed over him, blanching his youthful cheek. A manly form, kneeling at her head, now arose; and, turning to Richmond, Brixton said, with deep emotion,

"I think she is not dead; but she must die, if she remain here without assistance."

"I entreat, sir," said Colonel Crawford, who commanded the soldiers, "that you permit us to carry the wounded lady to the castle, which is already occupied by my people, and is at your command. We shall there be able to obtain the best assistance for the lady: we can procure some mats from the huts, upon which to carry her."

"I thank you," answered Richmond; "this news gives me hope: I was not aware that you had so soon made good your right."

"The entrance of my people rather retarded my arrival here," replied the colonel; "and, I fear, allowed time for more harm than can be remedied by the possession of the castle; but we will spare no care in rendering the lady all the assistance in our power."

While Colonel Crawford was giving his people the necessary commands for the preparation of a litter, and hastening them by his presence, Richmond in some degree recovered himself. The possibility of there being yet a spark of life left in her cold form, brought back his self-control, and restored his power of activity and usefulness when they were much needed. Having assisted Brixton in raising the lady, he hastened to aid the colonel in his arrangements, through which an excellent litter was made of soft mats tied to poles; and upon this, with the help of Margaret and Brixton, he placed the lifeless body, and it was carried slowly to the castle by the soldiers.

What a change had taken place here in the course of a few hours! The gates, which formerly were locked, and allowed entrance to those only who were attached to the castle, or who brought an authority from Lady Somerset or Father John, now stood wide open; and in the doorway of the lodge sat the old porter, with a soldier by his side, gazing at the open gates as if a vision of neglected duty had come upon him. The train passed him in silence, crossed the bridge and the inner court, and disappeared in the castle hall. There the new steward stood, in reluctant expectation of the commands which he should receive, and not daring to repress the crowd which pushed into the hall after the train, curious to behold the inaccessible castle which had given rise to such extraordinary tales, and also to learn whether the dreaded Father John had really murdered the lovely maiden.

Richmond was of Brixton's opinion: they thought it impossible that Father John could have stabbed her; and Richmond, with more probability, attributed her murder to the sailor who had carried her down to the beach. Colonel Crawford therefore issued orders to pursue this man, and to prevent the departure of the boat, which

could scarcely have put to sea, as the storm now raged with increased fury.

When they arrived in the hall, Margaret stepped forward, and recommended that the lady should be taken to the rooms on the ground floor which had formerly been prepared for her by Father Clement's orders. The steward, accompanied by several servants carrying lights, led the way, and the disfigured body was speedily laid in that apartment, which it had not long before trod in all the glow of health and youthful beauty. A second difficult question was how to procure medical aid, as the physician for whom Richmond, with the permission of Colonel Crawford, had sent, could not be expected before morning, and the great loss of blood made immediate assistance necessary. Margaret, who remained by the lady's side, removed this difficulty by requesting Richmond to send the steward to Sister Electa, to inform her that a person badly wounded required her aid. She informed them, that, in the absence of Father John, the sister attended upon the sick persons in the castle, and that she knew well how to treat dangerous wounds. This intelligence gave new hope to the friends of the lady, since it agreed with the well-known usages in houses of the kind, and which they could not doubt of finding in the castle; and when, after a short time, the door opened, and Sister Electa entered, accompanied by two women bearing different balsams, Richmond hastened to her with an impatience which made the timid creature tremble.

"Fear nothing, pious woman," said he, in the winning tone so peculiar to him. "You find here deeply afflicted friends, who anticipate hope and consolation from your assistance, if, indeed, you do not decide that all is lost."

Electa answered not; but, anxious to withdraw herself from the sight of so many men, she did not venture to advance a step, nor to move, nor even to inquire where her help was required. Margaret, however, glided past Richmond, and touching Electa's dress, said, "Haste, haste, Sister Electa; your help is needed for Lady Mary, who has been stabbed by Father John."

With a faint cry of horror, the trembling figure moved forward. She seemed now to have laid aside all fear, and with a countenance

indicating great sympathy she quickly passed behind Margaret to the litter, which stood in the middle of the room. For one moment she knelt by the side of Mary, gazing on her features with the deepest grief, and wringing her hands: then rising, she stepped with downcast eyes to Lord Richmond, to whom she whispered, "I must be alone: take your companions away."

Richmond immediately obeyed her request, leaving only the women with Electa. Her gentle activity was now most advantageously brought into use; and, under her orders, one of the women prepared a bath of herbs, while another lighted the fire, and got ready before it clean linen and surgical bandages, perfumed with essences; while Electa herself, assisted by Margaret, removed the blood-stained clothes, in order to discover the injuries which the lady had sustained. The breast and shoulders were uninjured, but on the left hip was a wound made by the ball, which, having touched an important blood-vessel, had caused the great loss of blood, the consequences of which could not be determined.

Bathed in unceasing tears, poor Margaret sobbed out, at every movement of Electa—"Is she dead? Will she die? Will she come to life again?"

Electa was skilful in her efforts; and, finding that the ball lay in the hip-joint, she immediately took an instrument from her box, made an incision, and the ball rolled along the floor. A cry of joy burst from Margaret; and, with redoubled impatience, she repeated her questions respecting the extent of the danger.

"She will not die of this wound," said sister Electa, speaking for the first time; "but it is impossible to foresee the consequences of the loss of blood."

Having bandaged the wound, she placed the rigid body in a strongly perfumed bath, the gentle warmth of which seemed to lessen the coldness and symptoms of death; and then, wrapping her in a warm, scented cloth, she had her carried to the bedroom. Hitherto no sign of life had rewarded these skilful cares, but, the temples having been bathed with spirit, some slight revival was apparent, and Electa with joy perceived that the few drops which she ventured to place between the half-opened lips were swallowed.

She could not resist making this known to Margaret; and she was soon farther gratified by a slight heaving of the breast, whilst the eyes unclosed themselves. Electa's look repressed Margaret's cry of joy, for consciousness had not yet returned.

Margaret's overburdened heart caused her to leave the room. She ran through the next apartment, heedless, in her joy, of the women who were there, and calling Lord Richmond so loudly, that, as she reached the hall, he rushed towards her, overcome by terror.

"She lives!" cried she, flying into his arms: "she has just opened her eyes!"

Deeply agitated, he pressed to his heart the faithful maiden, who, with womanly penetration, had guessed, and thus inadvertently betrayed, her discovery of his secret. Then releasing her, he hastened to Brixton, who, in great anxiety, and almost exhausted, was waiting for him. Joy and gratitude showed themselves in all faces at the happy news, and Margaret wept in the arms of Lanci, whose tears flowed with hers, for he was alarmed at the effect of the last few hours upon the poor girl. Notwithstanding the exhaustion which Brixton suffered, he could not be induced to retire for the remainder of the night, but determined to return to the room adjoining that of Mary. There, mattresses were soon laid down before the fire, and Brixton consented to take some repose; while Richmond, Lanci, and Crawford, seated by the fire, passed the hours in conversation; and Margaret was sometimes the bearer of news from the sick chamber, and occasionally spent a few moments with Lanci, apart from rest, in talking over the past.

"For a long time, my lord," said the colonel, in reply to one of Richmond's questions, "our attention has been fixed upon this castle and its secret inhabitants. My predecessors had the right of visiting it when they pleased, in order to assure themselves that the banished persons were still here. The lapse of many years has rendered their crimes and their persons a matter of indifference, thus giving them a kind of freedom. Their escape was not thought of, because enough remained of the property to give them a comfortable living; and the ill-health of both, and the known insanity

of the duke, made such a step improbable. Thus were discontinued those hateful visits, which, being received with unwillingness, ended in repulse to the visitors; and they were, besides, altogether useless. Our attention was often directed to this part of the coast, where smuggling has been carried on with a boldness which almost amounted to piracy, while it was conducted with a secrecy which attracted our notice to the castle. Lord Davenant, who preceded me in the command here, therefore resolved to put in force the nearly forgotten right, and to join with his visit to the castle, an examination of the side next the sea. I explained to him the numberless difficulties he would meet with; and that, while his scheme would increase suspicion, it would lead to no discovery. He gave notice in London of his intention; but, before the answer arrived, he received an order from the king, forbidding any disturbance of the castle during the life of the Duchess of Somerset, whom it represented as in great suffering. Meanwhile, Lord Davenant's intelligence had the effect, after he was called away, of bringing me a command to watch the castle from a distance very strictly, especially its connexion with the surrounding country. We were also to learn the moment of the lady's death; upon which the king, as feudal lord, was authorized to take possession, and, upon exhibition of the power delivered to me, search was to be made in order to discover, if possible, whether the rumours were well founded which indicated the purposes to which the castle had been devoted."

"It cannot be denied," answered Lord Richmond, "that though we were unable to prevent some misfortunes, we yet owe our co-operation to a happy concurrence of circumstances. The reason for bringing the lady to this castle is unknown to me, and there is much concerning her that is mysterious; but, at all events, we have prevented her from being carried away; and I cannot help thinking that her persecutors intended to murder her, or surely they would not have proposed to venture to sea on such a night as this."

"Do you think, my lord, that they knew of the approach of the lady's friends, and therefore determined to place her beyond your reach."

“ I do not doubt it. Our journey from London hither was not so rapid as I wished ; but to have hastened more would have been dangerous to the health of my old friend ; and I dared not precede him, as I stood in need of his advice and assistance. I also doubted whether the lady would accompany me, without the protection of this gentleman. I must now consider it very fortunate that I sent to D—— for your assistance ; although the delay which it caused me, led to a meeting with Father John, from whom I knew it was impossible to conceal our movements. I was therefore determined to seek other aid, in case we should be unable to carry out our plan of taking the lady away secretly, and also to cover her flight ; for I knew not what means of obstructing us the father might have at his command. I secretly left the inn where I had encountered this abominable priest, and guided by the directions which Lanci had given me, soon reached the wood in which stands the ranger’s cottage. It was night by the time I arrived there ; and the first intelligence I received was that of the death of the old steward, upon whose assistance we had firmly relied. I now gave up all hope of carrying Lady Melville away secretly, and resolved to go to the castle on the following day, and request Lady Somerset to deliver her up to me. As soon as Lanci heard this, he begged me to desist from this attempt ; at the same time referring me to his orders, which enjoined perfect secrecy . The ranger also advocated this plan ; adding, while he pointed to the letter which Lanci had brought for Miklas,

“ ‘ Lanci does not, for particular reasons, tell you the name of him who sent him to you ; but I know this handwriting, and he who wrote this letter knows more of life than most people, and you will do well to follow his advice.’

“ I consented to await the result of the ranger’s visit to the castle, and he promised to let Lanci accompany him, in order that Margaret might be informed of what we purposed. The next morning, the ranger started early on his errand ; and, during his absence, I strolled out, in order to examine the position of the castle. The storm had raged ever since daybreak ; and, as I passed the fishermen’s huts on the downs, I heard some men say that they dared not

venture to sea this day. Soon afterwards, however, one of them unfastened a boat which was lying by the shore, and put out to sea. I joined a group who were standing by watching him: they seemed to regard me as a suspicious person, and, for some time, took no notice of the questions which I put to them. At last, when I ventured to blame the young man for going out to sea in so violent a storm, an old fisherman said,

“ ‘ He must go, poor young man: he is commanded to fetch the coasting-ship with his boat.’

“ ‘ By any one at the castle?’ I inquired, as the truth suddenly darted into my mind. ‘ Is Father John already returned?’

“ ‘ Yes,’ said another; ‘ who else would command him to run such a risk? And whom else would the coasting-ship obey?’

“ I was now convinced that they intended to convey the lady to France; and I hastened to the ranger’s cottage, to consult with him as to our best plan of preventing this. He informed me that Lanci had been discovered, and made a prisoner; and that Lady Somerset had torn herself away from her guards, and, falling down the staircase where her husband died, had broken her neck. He therefore concluded that Father John had assumed the command of the castle, and we knew that we had nothing to hope from him. You, colonel, had told me of what you were empowered to do, in case of her death; and I immediately sent the ranger to inform you of it. Meanwhile, I returned to the sea-shore, resolved to prevent the father from carrying off the lady. I was alone, and had no other means of defence than my sword and pistol. I concealed myself in a crevice behind a rock, in order that my presence might not excite fresh suspicion among the fishermen. I saw the ship at anchor, at a short distance from the shore.”

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of an officer, who desired to speak with the colonel; and the latter, after begging Richmond to excuse him, retired to another room.

“ The punishment is completed, my lord,” said he, upon his return, “ without human intervention: the dreadful fate which Father John intended for the lady has become his own.”

"What?" exclaimed Richmond, "what do you mean?"

"The bodies of Father John and the sailors have been found upon the sands, and there is no doubt that the ship has been wrecked."

A momentary pause followed this announcement; and feelings of awe and reverence for that power which overrules the actions of mankind filled their minds.

"It is a just punishment," said Richmond. "The wicked, in their presumption, often overlook the possibility that the means which they make use of to harm others may be turned to their own destruction."

"I have given orders for their burial," said the colonel, "and now I must despatch to London intelligence of all that has occurred: I shall remain here until I have received further commands."

"May I request one thing?" asked Richmond: "that is that you will refrain from all mention of the Lady Melville's presence here, as it might lead to a fresh persecution, which, of course, we wish to avoid."

Colonel Crawford consented to this; observing that he regarded everything concerning this unfortunate lady as a strictly private affair.

During this conversation, Brixton enjoyed a short repose; and, upon his awaking, Richmond hastened to inform him of the news which Margaret had; from time to time, brought from the invalid's apartment. Morning dawned, and a consultation was held between the gentlemen as to the next step to be pursued. The castle was now a secure abode for Lady Mary; and, as her illness rendered her removal impracticable, it was decided that they should remain there, at least until she was somewhat recovered.

Master Brixton endeavoured to prevent Richmond from sending the news of their success to Godway Castle; and, at last, succeeded in persuading him to delay so doing until Electa considered her patient sufficiently restored to be removed. The party then proceeded to examine the castle, and to choose rooms for their habitation. The colonel also visited the nuns, whom he found utterly insensible to every feeling but that of terror lest they should be

punished ; and it was clear that they had not served their patroness from love, but from fear of her as one of the superiors of the order. The colonel promised to intercede for them with the king, and desired them, meanwhile, to remain in their rooms. He also, after having seen the body of Lady Somerset laid by the side of that of her husband, called the servants together, and informed them that they were liable to severe punishment for having participated in practices which the law forbade. He then placed guards at the entrance, with orders that no one should be allowed to pass. A subsequent examination of the various vaults of the castle, and the discovery of the treasures with which these were filled, satisfied him that smuggling, to a very large extent, had been there carried on.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Thanks to the skill and attention of Sister Electa, the Lady Mary soon began to recover rapidly. The efforts of the good sister were so successful that the physician who had been called, and who daily visited her, merely ascertained the state of her pulse, and prognosticated a speedy restoration of her strength. It was an affecting moment when Electa led the worthy Brixton to the bedside of his pupil. Mary wished to kiss his hand ; but he laid his own upon her head, and appeared to bless her, though his trembling voice was scarcely heard. He sat down opposite to her, and fixed his eyes intently upon her, unmindful of the tears which were flowing down his cheeks.

“ My benefactor ! my father ! my saviour ! ” cried the deeply agitated girl ; “ what dangers, what difficulties, have you not encountered to save me, my only protector upon earth ! ”

“ Compose yourself, Lady Mary, ” answered the old man, gently : “ you must not thus give way to your feelings : it will only retard your recovery. But you will soon perceive that you have yet many friends. ”

"Ah, sir!" sighed Mary, "do you not know that death has deprived me of them all. How can you say that any other beside yourself is left to me? for the one whom I endeavoured to find has withdrawn himself from me."

"Trust to me, dear lady," said Brixton, impressively—"trust the future to me, for I can look forward more clearly than you. You are at present in safety; and we only await your recovery, in order to place you again in a happy position."

Mary's eyes had turned with a look of expectation upon Brixton, but she now cast them upon the ground; for an undefined foreboding had taken possession of her mind; hope, however, soon came to her relief, and dispelled all her fears. Brixton had now time to look at her; and her emarked with grief the alteration which sorrow and bodily exhaustion had made in her features. He thought of those who had cherished such high hopes for this child, and who could never have foreseen her present condition; he remembered with what exalted anticipations he had educated her, and the elevated situation which he had expected to see her fill: now all was changed, and his only desire was that she might pass a quiet and unobtrusive life.

"And may I ask, without displeasing you, sir," said Mary, after a brief pause, "whither you wish to take me? When shall I be able to travel? May I know?"

"I hope that Lord Richmond, who has assisted me with the greatest zeal, will take both you and me to his mother, the Duchess of Nottingham, until your natural protector sees fit to restore you to your rank and independence."

"Then," said Mary, "I was not mistaken in supposing that Lord Richmond is here. And can I return to my benefactress? Tell me, has she forgiven me? Will she receive me? Who has explained to her the treachery of which I was the victim?"

"Spare yourself, dear lady," said Brixton, for he perceived that she was agitated, and that her colour changed. "Wait till your health is in some degree restored, and then we will consider of the future."

"I will," said she, gently; and following Electa's advice, she

laid herself back on the pillow. Hope had filled her mind; and quiet and loneliness were therefore no longer painful to her.

Electa was astonished at her patient's rapid progress towards recovery. The wound speedily healed, and she soon walked without any other assistance than Margaret's ever-ready arm, while her pale face gradually lost its deathlike appearance. The good sister now communicated the request of the gentlemen, that they might be permitted to see her; and one morning, after having passed some hours in meditating upon the events which had occurred, and in earnest hope for the future, intelligence was brought to her that they awaited her in the little sitting-room. She remained for a moment with her eyes cast upon the ground; then, gaining courage, she took Margaret's arm, and walked slowly to the door. As when she first entered this room, the large old-fashioned chairs stood around the fire; but now they were neither empty nor occupied by enemies, but by dear friends and protectors, who rose hastily to greet her. Colonel Crawford being a stranger, was first presented to her by Master Brixton: he received with respect her thanks for the services he had rendered to her, but could not help evincing his admiration of her beauty and grace, which, though somewhat changed by sickness, yet exercised its former enchantment upon all.

Richmond had sought, meanwhile, to obtain composure; and when her eyes rested upon him, he hastened towards her. Neither of them were able to speak: the consciousness of being near each other produced in them a feeling of peace and happiness to which they endeavoured in vain to give utterance.

"There are moments in life," said Richmond, "when the heart is so overflowed with joy, that all past sorrows are forgotten; and this is one of them."

"My deliverer!" ejaculated Mary, while tears fell from her eyes.

"Oh, call me not so," said Richmond, sighing; "I have not been able to save you from ill-treatment, which threatened to end your life."

"It would have been ended," said Mary, "if you had not saved

me. I should have been lost in the boat, had you not nobly rescued me before they could carry me thither."

"Let us bid adieu to these sorrowful recollections, dear lady," interrupted Brixton. "Will you consent to remain with us a little time, that we may have the pleasure of witnessing your perfect recovery?"

"I long, my dear sir," answered Lady Mary, turning to Brixton, "to give you an account of my life, from the time when the death of my aunt left me desolate; and to you, my lord, I wish to relate the circumstances which caused me to quit the protection of your noble mother, and which induced me to resist your persuasions to return to her. You will then, I think, judge of me kindly. The sudden change in my situation had not given me either the penetration or the experience which were necessary to guide my actions; and I confess, with shame, the self-reliance which led me to follow my youthful impulses. Let the heavy punishment which I have suffered induce you to deal gently with me," added she, with a smile which bespoke the indulgence of her auditors.

"Such an extraordinary life as yours," answered Richmond, "is the lot of but few persons. It was not probable, therefore, that your innocent heart should suspect the wicked designs of your persecutors, which they sought to effect by such crafty means as you could never have imagined. We can only lament that we had no other right than that sanctioned by a slight friendship, which was not sufficient to justify our interference in your affairs."

"I reproach myself bitterly," said Mary, "that any thing should have prevented me from acknowledging the right which this friendship gave you, and from asking your advice. But my situation was extremely distressing; and the necessity of choosing between duty and inclination was calculated to perplex my mind. I cannot yet understand what led to my withdrawal from the honourable protection of your family, Lord Richmond; besides which, those who first deceived me seem to have been duped in their turn by others. Certainly, their first idea was to deprive me of freedom and happiness, and this intention was encouraged by the hatred of Lady Somerset, who desired even to deprive me of life. But there is one man

among my persecutors," added she, after a short pause, "who is entitled to my esteem and respect. I allude to him who released me from Lord Membroke, and who brought me to this castle. He appeared to do this against his will; and I discovered that the noble mind which he afterwards displayed was chained in strict obedience to the laws of the order of the Jesuits. He was a monk, and named Clement. Though he was obliged to immure me within these walls, he was careful to protect my employments; and to him I owe the permission to inhabit these rooms, and to have Margaret as my companion. I long hoped that he would procure me my freedom; and though in this respect I was disappointed, I am convinced it was not from disinclination on his part, but from the commands laid upon him by his order. I therefore believed him when he informed me that he had rescued me from destruction; and that Lord Membroke was the agent of one of the most corrupt noblemen in the land—the Duke of Buckingham."

"The Duke of Buckingham!" cried Brixton, with surprise: "is it possible that you were in his hands? Tell me, did he know who you were?"

"Dear sir," said Mary, somewhat reproachfully, "you forget that I am not myself aware who I am, and therefore I cannot tell whether he knew me. Yet, certainly, he was acquainted with some part of my history; for he deceived me by means of this letter and this seal, which led me to obey him, although I had resisted every other persuasion."

Mary drew forth the letter, and gave it to Brixton.

"Great God!" cried Brixton, as his glance fell upon it: "all is betrayed!"

"Father Clement," continued Mary, "told me that this letter was not really written by my uncle; that they had imitated his handwriting, and stolen the seal from him, in order the more fully to deceive me."

"Ah, dear lady," said Brixton, "this alters the affair. Had the duke been aware that this handwriting and seal were necessary, a highly important discovery might have taken place, and you would have been threatened by other dangers."

"I hope," cried Richmond, "that no danger can happen to the Lady Mary so long as she trusts herself to you, and allows me the privilege of defending her."

"In case anything should occur, I must beg you to accept my assistance, and that of my regiment; that is, if my duty does not forbid it," said Colonel Crawford, bowing respectfully to Mary.

"Our journey must take place, lady, as soon as your health will permit," said Brixton. "I hope that the Duchess of Nottingham will grant you protection until I can place you in that position to which you are entitled by your birth."

"Certainly, my lady," answered Richmond, "your returning to my mother, of your own accord, will, I am sure, reconcile her to you."

"We have the more reason to hope that the duchess will grant us hospitality," said Brixton, interrupting Mary's thanks, "since we cannot but suppose that the unknown person who sent Lanci to us, and whose name he will not reveal, is by some means, acquainted with the purposes of this lady's persecutors. We are, therefore, bound to follow his advice, and place her immediately in charge of your family, Lord Richmond."

"I hope that Lady Mary," answered he, "will not hesitate to follow this mysterious warning, and to honour our family by her presence."

"I only desire the pardon and indulgence of my benefactors," said Mary, "and my youth and inexperience must plead my excuse."

"Will you have the goodness," asked Brixton, "to give us exact particulars of your flight, and of all that has since occurred?"

"I long to communicate all this to you, honoured sir; but permit me, before I begin my relation, to ask you one question, which I feel to be the more important to me, in consequence of all that has lately occurred. Who am I?" she asked, in a trembling voice, while Brixton cast his eyes upon the ground in evident confusion. Have I a right to the name which I have hitherto borne? Have I any relations? and will my history be ever freed from that mysterious darkness which makes me an object of suspicion, and places my honour in doubt? You can, I am sure, answer these questions, for

you were acquainted with those beloved friends who guarded my youth."

"You are right, Lady Mary," said Brixton, calmly: "I do know all of which you wish to be informed, but I cannot communicate it to you. I think it quite right that you should be made acquainted with the history of your birth; but an oath forbids my revealing it to you. Have patience, therefore; for the moment will soon arrive when all obstacles will be removed; and though your situation be somewhat different from what your friends once imagined, do not cease to repose confidence in them."

Mary was silent; but her features expressed disappointment: for the longer she remained in ignorance of her history, the more were her doubts increased as to her rightful position.

"You, sir," said she, in an agitated voice—"you, sir, and all who surrounded me, always endeavoured to awake feelings of honour within me, and to lead me to hate and avoid all concealment. Forgive me, then, that I now, on the point of returning to the world, cannot submit without resistance to be a nameless and mysterious being. Yet," added she, turning with childlike reverence towards Brixton, who appeared much affected, "I will remember that I cannot better testify my respect and esteem for you than by bearing my painful situation without annoying you."

"Be assured," answered Brixton, "that I will use all the means in my power to relieve you from this anxiety; but now relate to us your history."

"I would," said she; "but I hear my careful physician at the door, and I must not longer remain here."

At this moment Electa entered; and, finding by her patient's pulse that she had been much agitated, begged her to take some repose. Mary consented; and bidding farewell to her friends, accompanied Electa to her room. She joined the little party again that day, and then related all that had happened to her.

We will leave our readers to imagine the impression which this narrative make upon her auditors, merely observing, that while Richmond threatened to punish Membroke for his treachery, Brixton felt himself involved in difficulties, which were the more

tormenting, because he could not perceive why Buckingham, who certainly was acquainted with her birth, allowed these Jesuits to become acquainted with it, thus causing the frustration of his own plans. After long consideration, he resolved to apply at once to the illustrious person most interested in his charge, and therefore urged her immediate departure from the castle. Sister Electa, however, begged that she might remain two days longer; and the gentlemen acceding to her request, busied themselves, meanwhile, in making preparations for the journey.

The society of her friends, and the quiet which surrounded her, were so beneficial to Mary, that she required no further delay; and she would have taken leave of the castle with joy, had she not been anxious respecting the fate of her nurse Electa. This gentle creature, whose weak disposition had placed her in willing slavery to her spiritual superior, and who had been led to consider an innocent longing for the world as the vilest sin, was now shaken in her devotion to those whom she formerly revered, by the knowledge of their true character, which recent events had revealed to her.

Her mind had been occupied by the attention bestowed on her patient; but now that all need of care for her was at an end, and the near departure of the lady was about to deprive her of the society of the only being whom she could love, she returned to her former state of mind, and the future and the past seemed to her one unbroken chain of sorrow and misfortune.

Mary tenderly sought to become acquainted with her feelings, and ventured gently to hint at her return to the world; but she found that a disinclination to this was strongly rooted in the unhappy woman's mind, and that her heavy heart anticipated peace only in an entire resignation of all the enjoyments of life. Mary considered, for some time, whether she could, in any manner, alleviate her distress; and, suddenly struck by a thought, asked her where Father Clement usually resided?

Electa appeared startled at the sound of his name, and immediately mentioned the monastery in France to which he had retired.

"Well, then," said Mary, "go to him, and resign your future life to his direction."

"Angel of heaven!" cried Electa, as if inspired: "that would indeed be happiness to me. But how shall I reach him?" added she, returning to her usual depression.

"Leave that to me," said Mary, joyfully. "I give you my word, you shall have means to travel thither." She pressed the grateful woman to her heart; and then hastened to join her companions, to whom she imparted Electa's wishes, and her own intentions relative to them.

Richmond and Brixton both expressed their approbation of her plan; but Colonel Crawford, after a short silence, intimated that he could not permit the sisters to leave the castle until he had received his instructions from London; for, till then, he must regard all whom he had found there as his prisoners. He added, that he hoped no further steps would be taken in the affair, but that it would be allowed to pass into oblivion; and then he would do all in his power to forward Lady Mary's views.

"Oh, sir," cried Mary, with animation, "remember that we leave the castle to-morrow; and think with what anxiety I shall depart, if I leave this poor creature behind me, without even being allowed to furnish her with the means for her journey."

"Leave her to me as a bequest from you," said Crawford, respectfully; "and the interests of this person, to whom we partly owe the preservation of your life, shall be considered holy by me. I will fulfil your commands with the greatest exactitude; will remove all hindrances, and so arrange her journey, that she shall be totally free from all discomfort and annoyance."

"I think, dear lady," said Brixton, "that we must not urge Colonel Crawford any further, since his duty here opposes his inclination. We may certainly trust our friend to his care; and it now only remains for you to reconcile her to remaining here for the present."

As Richmond coincided in Brixton's opinion, Mary offered no further resistance, but hastened to inform Electa of what had passed; which intelligence the gentle sister received with greater composure than her benefactress had expected.

The next morning, while the first rays of the glorious sun were

shining upon the countless dew-drops with which the trees and grass were covered, Mary descended to the great hall of the castle, where the gentlemen were already assembled. She stood still for a moment ; and as her eyes glanced upon the objects around her, her thoughts reverted to the evening when, accompanied by Father Clement, she had arrived at the castle, and was received by the 'good old man who had afterwards exerted himself so much to cheer her imprisonment. She thanked Colonel Crawford for his kind services, and embraced her kind friend, Electa; then, together with Margaret, entered the same litter in which she had travelled thither, while the gentlemen and Lanci mounted their horses. Colonel Crawford accompanied the little procession for some distance ; but Lord Richmond declined his offer of a military escort, deeming it better to avoid attracting attention as much as possible.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Godway Castle was at this time, as usual, full of company. Lord Bristol had departed to one of his own estates; but his long absence in Spain had made his late presence at the castle appear only as a visit, and he was now scarcely missed, except by his daughter, the younger Duchess of Nottingham, who felt so deeply, and was so well skilled in concealing those failings from others. Her mind was at variance with the circumstances in which she was placed; and this disposition continually increased, as all means failed of releasing herself from the constraint laid upon a mind accustomed only to lead and control others. For the rest, all went on happily in the circle at Godway Castle.

Anna Dorset, now justified in confessing the love which she bore to her husband, showed in her whole character a depth of womanly tenderness which rivetted the heart of the young duke, filling him with astonishment, like that we feel upon seeing a young flower-

bad, which, with its closely-shut petals, could scarcely claim our notice, expand, under the warmth of the sun, to a bright and fragrant flower. The Countess of Dorset and Olonia had accompanied the newly-married couple to Godway Castle; and Lord Ormond, after an absence of many months, found himself once more within its walls. Lord Archibald was engaged in arranging the papers of the late duke; but he joined the circle at those public assemblies over which the elder duchess presided like a genius, spreading love and kindness around. Thus all appeared to be repose and harmony, with joyful hopes for the future. There were, however, so many freshly-healed wounds, and so many irritable spots in almost every breast, that it needed all the kind feeling, all the love, all the good breeding, of each person, to avoid disturbing the present happiness, which it was the general wish to maintain. The cause of Richmond's absence was well known, but no one alluded to it; for the duchess had expressed to her father her displeasure at the undertaking in so harsh a manner, as to produce a coolness between them, which was alleviated only by the departure of Lord Bristol; and this being known by the rest of the circle, no attempt was made to soften the duchess's opinion. She ceased to mention Richmond, and no one dared to refer to him in her presence; while the unhappy Lady Mary, though frequently and tenderly thought of by all, was apparently forgotten.

With the deepest anguish did the unhappy mother await the intelligence which should alleviate or increase her misery; and, aware of all the danger which lay before her, she gave way to her uncertain and gloomy temper. The young duke had hoped to receive some news from Lord Ormond, who was just come from London; but he brought none, although he had delayed his journey in the expectation of it. The conversations between these friends upon this interesting topic were characterized by a reserve which showed too clearly the delicacy of the subject: each felt that his situation with respect to the object of their conversation had changed, and each wished to confirm himself in his altered feelings.

Lord Ormond, who could not, like the duke, feel his interest in

Mary withdrawn by the holiest of ties, had, through her words, made a discovery respecting Olonia which led him to watch himself narrowly. He had at length, notwithstanding his real modesty, found the truth of her words, and he could not help reproaching himself for having allowed his heart to be attracted in another direction, and his attention to be diverted from the being so near to him. He had imposed upon himself a separation of several months; and his heart was divided in anxiety for the two individuals in whom he was so much interested. He dreaded to see Olonia again, but dared no longer delay; for Lady Dorset had complained of his long and unusual absence. When we feel insecure, we lay plans for our future conduct. All Ormond's resolutions, however, vanished at the sight of Olonia. The beautiful girl had grown into the charming woman; the open-heartedness of the child had deepened into tender reserve. He felt, at the first moment, that she was separated from him in mind, and that, whatever feelings might influence her heart, they were known to herself alone; while she carefully guarded herself from any emotion by which they might be betrayed. The calmness of her manner again deceived this intellectual man, hitherto so skilled in reading the human mind, and his modesty led him to suppose that the feeling which had once existed was now extinct. But he now felt that his own heart was in danger; and the more cold and changed Olonia appeared to him, the more he wished to penetrate the recesses of that mind, once so open to him, and to trace, if possible, the causes which had produced the change in her. He felt displeased when, at last, his observations convinced him that, while a child, she had been alienated from him, and he felt irresistibly prompted to endeavour to gain the confidence of this reserved young creature.

The spring had opened the stores of nature, and spread its rich treasures over the earth. All at Godway Castle enjoyed this lovely season in proportion to their susceptibility to the charms of nature, and all suffered themselves to be enticed occasionally to share in the out-door amusements. One evening, the ladies and gentlemen were returning through the wood to the castle, after a long excursion on horseback; Arabella, Olonia, and the young duchess were a little

in advance of the gentlemen; and as they were crossing the main road, a cry of surprise and joy arose from all. Arabella spurred her horse, and flew along the path.

“Richmond! Richmond!” cried Lady Anna to her husband; and all hastened to greet the new arrival.

“Oh, Richmond!” exclaimed the young duchess, “how much we have all wished for you; and how long you have left us without the consolation of hearing from you.”

“Do not blame me for what circumstances made unavoidable,” said Richmond; “and do not think that my love to you is the less. But tell me, in order to relieve me from that anxiety, how is my mother?”

The momentary pause which ensued, and which was owing to a doubt respecting the mood of the duchess, touched Richmond’s tender heart. His countenance expressed this: which was observed by the young duchess, who hastened to satisfy him, assuring him that his mother was well, but that she must be prepared for his arrival. Richmond perceived that there was some difficulty; and he guessed the cause, for he well knew that his mother had forbidden every attempt to discover Lady Mary, and that in this respect he had disobeyed her.

“I request you, then, to prepare her as soon as you can,” said he, conscious of the rectitude of his own conduct, and trusting in his mother’s love. “Two persons follow on foot, of whose circumstances I long to tell her; and, while I recommend them to your love, I may name them as old acquaintances—Lady Melville, and her tutor, Master Brixton.”

An exclamation of surprise was the answer to this news, which was received by the party with various feelings. After a short struggle, the young duke resolved to accompany his brother to the castle, begging Lord Ormond and Ramsey to meet the travellers, to greet them in his name, and invite them to Godway Castle. Then he guided his horse to his wife’s side, and, taking her bridle with peculiar attention, they journeyed on together. Lord Archibald resolved to accompany his favourite, as it was very painful to him that Richmond should fall under the displeasure of his sister-in-law.

He hastened on before the duke, and perhaps the latter very willingly left this matter to his uncle. A short conversation had given the latter a sketch of what had happened ; and he hoped that these communications would soften and reconcile the mother's heart. He found her in a harsh and cold temper, sufficient to repulse a man less self-possessed than Lord Archibald ; but, on the contrary, this only excited his characteristic sternness.

"I hope, my dear sister," said he, "that this is a favourable time for the best tidings I can bring you. Richmond, the lost son, approaches the castle ; and I have hastened forward to ask a smile from you as the reward of my intelligence."

The sudden alarm which agitated the heart of the duchess spread a deep glow over her immovable features, and deprived her of speech. Visibly struggling against the joy which this intelligence gave her, she soon regained the calmness with which she thought herself obliged to receive it.

"You surprise me, my lord," she said : "permit me to add, that this is the only feeling to which I can give way. The mother too soon learns to regard her children as strangers, and to feel herself cast aside by them. By his recent conduct, my son has made my heart too sorrowful to feel at ease towards him, since I am free from the weakness of blindly admiring his conduct, simply because he is my son."

"He does not dare to advance such a claim," answered Lord Archibald, with cool indifference ; "on the contrary, he appears to have performed, with manly firmness, what became a duty to us all ; though it was attended with so many difficulties, that it lay fairly beyond the sphere of a woman's activity."

"I do not allow that this affair, in so far as you allude to the fate of the young adventuress to whom we granted protection, lay beyond my guidance : the matter was perfectly clear to me, and imposed responsibility on no one. I therefore am entitled to regard his unauthorized interference as presumption, and an opposition to my will."

"I cannot assume that all who live in your grace's presence," answered Lord Archibald, "should have been convinced of the im-

propriety of such interference. Permit me, however, to remind you, that we ought never to trust our own opinions so implicitly, as not to be aware that there may be a manner of thinking and acting which is beyond our reach. At least," added he, smiling, "I have often found myself in this case, and have not unwillingly perceived the activity of another to lie far beyond the limit of my own."

"Pardon me," said the duchess; "I do not wish to be convinced of this by my children, at least in the case before us, which is an affair in no way honourable to my family, since the immorality and unworthiness of the person is placed beyond doubt by her conduct."

"A very different opinion may be defended, and even proved, on that point," answered Lord Archibald. "I rejoice in being able to add, that Richmond, who is truth itself at all times, and possesses a clear perception of things, gave me the most conclusive assurances in this matter, the correctness of which appears to me sufficiently proved by the return of the unhappy maiden in company with the reverend Master Brixton, who recommends her to your protection."

"What do you say?" cried the duchess, rising quickly: "does my son, Lord Richmond, bring back the maiden who withdrew herself from our protection, in order to fly with a dishonourable man, whose name we cannot hear mentioned before our daughters without blushing? Does he bring this girl back to our family circle? And you, Lord Archibald, do you take it upon yourself to convey to me this intelligence? Oh! go, go, my lord; you laugh at my years. You avail yourself of my understanding having become obtuse through grief, to try the effect of your fables; but it is evident enough that they are badly devised. I neither think that you lack penetration, nor that I, by believing you, must tear away the love of my child from my heart."

"I have no tact for fable, my lady," said Lord Archibald, coldly; "nor am I inclined to try the strength of your understanding at this moment. This is not the tragic affair which your words indicate; it is very simple. A young maiden was deceived by the art of an experienced man of the world; but she did wrong only in ap-

pearance; and now, being released from imprisonment, she seeks, with unspotted character, those from whom she formerly received assistance and protection."

The duchess was about to reply, when steps were heard, and, in the next moment, Richmond entered, and threw himself at his mother's feet with all the enthusiasm of filial affection. The angry answer of the haughty woman died on her lips. The magic which the sight of a beloved one exercises over all the powers of the mind—the harmony which fills the soul when we behold, in the fulness of life, that being whose image is painted indestructibly on the innermost core of our heart—this feeling seized the mother's soul, and peace revisited for a moment her agitated breast.

But Richmond knew his mother too well not to see her repressed anger in her features; and having no doubt respecting the cause, he had the courage not to avoid the subject, but to enter upon it immediately.

"Oh, be kind to me, dear mother!" cried he, in a tone of the deepest love; "and be assured that you may be so without reserve. What I have to tell you does not deserve either your anger or your apprehension. I am strong in the consciousness of having acted as you would have demanded of your son."

The duchess was silent: involuntarily her ear listened to the persuasive words of her favourite son; but the phantom of her anxiety stepped in: the seducing hope appeared weakness to her, and she tore herself from it.

"And is it true, what Lord Archibald affirms," said she, looking at him with an expression of deep melancholy—"is it true, that you bring back her who had withdrawn herself from my protection in a manner alike repugnant to respectability and morality—do you bring her back to our honourable abode?"

"It is so," said Lord Richmond, rising. "And, in truth, I think I have acted rightly. For I have freed from the hands of wicked men a noble being, persecuted by fate, but pure and innocent as the light of heaven; and, in doing so, I have prevented a most cruel act of violence."

"You must prove the truth of what you relate to me, my son,"

answered the duchess; "and your proofs will be closely examined. The clever arts and persuasive tears of a beautiful maiden will not convince me; nor will whatever means she may have invoked to her aid succeed so easily with me, as they seem to have done with you."

"Lady Melville," said Richmond, gravely, "has never made her unhappy fate a subject of conversation with me; she scarcely knows the existence of the arts at which you have hinted, and has left all her affairs in the hands of her tutor, Master Brixton, whom she found with me; and to whom she related all that she had passed through, in order that we might be able to decide what steps we should take. The history of her former life—the mystery which hangs over it—why she was withdrawn from our protection—why she was of such importance, that her persecutors would rather take her life than allow her to be brought forward;—all this is partly Brixton's secret, and is as yet unexplained."

"Truly," said the duchess, who was torn by conflicting emotions, "there are so many exceptions to the explanations which you offer me, that my mistrust of their validity is strongly excited; and I cannot thank you for bringing this mysterious maiden into a circle which ought to keep itself free from every person of doubtful character."

"And it will remain free from this," said Richmond. "Do not reject the evidence of an honourable clergyman, or that of your own son, whose testimony is borne witness to by the most heavenly innocence, merely because you are unwilling to relinquish a preconceived opinion."

The duchess had never until now heard so harsh a speech from her son. She was alarmed; and, feeling that she must choose between anger and generous compliance, she yielded at last, saying, in a gentle tone,

"I leave the words you have just spoken to your own consideration; and I shall show you that I can act with the same moderation and self-control that I expect from all those belonging to me. You demand much of me, in asking me to receive a young lady whose character has been rendered dubious by her actions, and

whose friends refuse to give me any explanations; preferring to wrap all concerning her in impenetrable darkness."

"You will consent to see Brixton?" said Richmond, keeping his object in view: "may I bring him to you, dear mother?"

"Is that necessary?" said she, coldly. "My son, the duke, has already given his consent to their reception; I have, therefore, nothing further to say, and am not now in the mood to listen patiently to a mysterious narration."

"Neither Master Brixton nor Lady Melville will enter this house without the consent of my honoured mother," said Richmond.

"Lady Melville! Lady Melville! Do you not know, my son, that Lord Melville, whom she calls her father, died childless."

"I know it," answered Richmond, firmly; "but Brixton assures me that she must bear this name until he is absolved from his oath of silence."

"Well," said the duchess, with that peculiar smile which wounds more than any words can do, "I cannot deny that much is expected by me, and also that much depends upon Master Brixton's communication."

"Nothing, my dear mother, can disturb my confidence that these explanations will be satisfactory to us."

"Enough, enough. I will perform what is required of me, and soon; for I wish to turn my thoughts from this affair."

Lord Archibald and Richmond both felt that it would be better to put an end to a conversation which tempted the latter to forget the respect which he owed to his mother, which was one of the deepest feelings of his heart. Both gentlemen therefore withdrew; and the duchess passed the remainder of the day in her apartment, excusing herself from joining the company on the plea of indisposition.

The conversation which the lady held the next morning with Master Brixton was satisfactory to neither party. The partial information which this worthy man gave was but little calculated to overcome his opponent's harshness; and he was obliged to content himself with relating the history of Lord Membroke's deception, and what had afterwards taken place in the castle of the Lady Somerset.

This story was not unheeded, and the good effect which it produced was strengthened by his account of Richmond's conduct during the journey to Godway Castle; for it relieved the duchess from her fear of any engagement existing between him and the Lady Mary. She consented at last to see her guest, and to allow her to remain at the castle during Brixton's visit to London, whither he intended to hasten immediately. She received Mary with a pride and coldness which wounded the unfortunate lady deeply, but which she bore with resignation, since she bitterly repented of having, by her carelessness, forfeited the confidence of her benefactress.

Lady Mary had long since lost the happy thoughtlessness of youth: she knew that her name, birth, and situation were doubtful; and it did not escape her penetration that Brixton was full of anxiety respecting the next step which duty required of him. She endeavoured, at the same time, to win the favour of those from whom she was separated by so much mystery, and among whom she was denied an honourable position. With deep shame she saw herself thrust upon the family of Nottingham, to which she consented only in compliance with the united request of Richmond and Brixton, neither of whom knew of any other safe abode, though the latter unceasingly encouraged the hope that she would soon be released with honour from her unpleasant situation.

Except the duchess, all in the house showed Mary confidence and affection, seeming to consider her unhappiness only as a further claim upon their kindness. During her journey, while receiving daily proofs of the polite attention and devotion of Lord Richmond in protecting her from every accident, Lady Mary still conducted herself with distant respect towards him. This reserve was now increased; for the security of her situation, and the perfect order which reigned in the castle, rendered this attention unnecessary; and an estrangement appeared between them which seemed to indicate that no greater intimacy had ever existed. By degrees, Mary suffered a melancholy to steal over her, which seemed to others to arise from the circumstances of her situation, known to all; but which she could not but attribute to another cause; and this began to usurp her heart to such an extent as to deprive her of all strength

to resist other troubles, or to suffer them to be overpowered by this one feeling. She was too pious, too resigned, to wish for death; but she was shocked to find herself indifferent as to the future; while the only subject which called forth her sympathy was the thought of her uncle, of whose existence Brixton was certain, as also of his being worthy of her high remembrance of his virtues.

Olonia took her accustomed place by her dear Lady Mary, of whose friendship she might be said to have become well deserving by the recent development of her character. They read each other's melancholy eyes, but the holiest seal was on their lips; and the acknowledgment of a common feeling was seen only in the pleasure which they experienced in each other's society. Lady Anna was too exclusively devoted to her husband to be accessible to the feeling of friendship in the same degree: she fully acknowledged Mary's worth, while the fine tact of a woman in love forced upon her the conclusion that such a being was not unworthy to have been chosen by her husband.

The demeanour of the duke towards the Lady Mary was so quiet and firm, that not the slightest uneasiness was excited in the minds of those around him. He was, as formerly, kind and considerate, and used every effort to make Godway Castle a home to her, in which he was assisted by his young wife and his sisters. The elder duchess could not suppress her affection for her; and even Lord Archibald could not conceal his predilection in her favour.

Mary felt all this, and endeavoured to evince her gratitude; but there was a continual struggle in her mind which made her spirits unequal, and which instilled feelings of the most bitter anguish into her hours of joy. She remembered the moment when she had first acknowledged to herself her attachment to Richmond, and when she looked upon this feeling as a source of future happiness and joy. His devotion to her interests had formerly filled her mind with joyful anticipations; but now this hope was destroyed, and she sought for a reason for the reserve with which he treated her. It could not escape her penetration, that the duchess disapproved of his efforts in her behalf; and she concluded that he wished, by maintaining a coldness of manner towards her to remove this

displeasure, and also any suspicion that might have been excited in the minds of those around him.

But true love rarely is content with seeking, apart from itself, for the cause of the estrangement of the beloved object: it attributes this to its own unworthiness, and refuses to win what it thinks denied to itself on account of its worthlessness. Thus it was with Mary. The melancholy which now took possession of her mind threw a pall over all her hopes for the future; her only wish was to die within sight of him she loved, and she dreaded lest any change in her situation should deprive her of this consolation.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The beautiful warm spring days had now arrived, and the young duke made unceasing efforts to procure amusement for the guests assembled at Godway Castle. They explored the adjacent country on horseback or in carriages; and scarcely a day passed without an excursion to some favourite spot, either among the hills, or in the woods. On these occasions Lord Ormond always conducted Lady Mary and Olonia Dorset; while Richmond rode beside his mother's carriage, or gave his whole attention to the stranger guests.

A little dispute concerning the boundaries of some land, which had been settled by the obliging disposition of the duke, had led to an invitation from Master Allincroft, who owned the ground, to the inhabitants of the castle, to spend a day upon the disputed spot, where tents were to be erected for their reception. Master Allincroft urged his request so strongly, that all except the elder duchess and Lady Dorset agreed to be present.

The way to the place of meeting lay along a stony road, which, descending the hill, led to a pass so narrow, that the carriage, in which were the duchess and Lucy, could only drive through with difficulty. Lady Mary had quitted her usual companions, and had

preceded the rest of the party to a small eminence, whence she could perceive the tents prepared for the occasion. Master Allin-croft, concluding that his guests were approaching, gave a signal as soon as he caught sight of her ; and immediately the sound of cannon was heard, and banners were waved to greet them. Mary's horse was frightened by this unusual noise, but by caresses she succeeded in appeasing him, when, turning round, she looked towards the rest of the cavalcade. What a sight met her eye ! The horses in the duchess's carriage had also been alarmed by the sound, and rushing through the pass, had thrown their riders, and were galloping at full speed down the hill, at the bottom of which flowed a rapid stream.

Mary's quick eye soon saw the fate which awaited those in the carriage : the duchess and Lucy must perish, unless some one came to their aid. The equestrians behind hastened after them, but the noise of their horses only terrified those of the duchess the more. Mary was the only one in advance of the carriage. The thought crossed her mind how happy she should be if she could save the life of Richmond's mother ; and, without hesitating a moment, she put spurs to her horse, and with two leaps clearing the intermediate space, stood quietly on one side of the pass. She seized the reins, and, despite their resistance, would have succeeded in arresting the furious animals, had not her own horse been alarmed, and, becoming restive, entangled himself in the harness, which hung upon the road. The carriage stopped, but was dashed from side to side by the efforts which the animals made to free themselves.

Lady Mary narrowly escaped being thrown ; but her presence of mind did not desert her, until her horse, making a sudden bound, extricated himself from the others, and rushed down the hill, carrying her to that destruction which she had endeavoured to avert from her benefactress. Her head was injured by the blows which she received in passing rapidly under the trees : she neither saw nor heard anything more, whilst her steed rushed furiously on.

The party behind had witnessed this frightful disaster ; and Richmond, who had nearly succeeded in overtaking the carriage, was terrified when he saw Mary appear below, and endeavouring to

stay the furious animals. He beheld her carried away, and the destruction which threatened her flashed across his mind. At the same moment, he beheld his mother sitting quietly in the carriage, whilst the weeping Lucy was hiding her pale face in her lap. These two were safe, and he spurred his horse to overtake the unhappy Mary. His attempt was in vain: before he reached her, she was thrown from her seat, and was dragged along the ground, the blood flowing copiously from her mouth. She was taken up insensible, and carried immediately to the tent.

When she again opened her eyes, it seemed to her as if some great happiness had come upon her. She was resting in the arms of the duchess, who was watching her with an expression of love mingled with anxiety; Richmond was kneeling at her feet, with her hands clasped in his; the tent, so beautifully ornamented with wreaths of flowers—the soft moss on which she lay—all conspired to make her think that she was in a delightful dream; and she felt as if all sorrow were past, and that happiness was now to be her portion.

Stanloff now came forward. "She lives," said he, gently.

"Good God!" exclaimed Richmond, "is it possible? She lives!" he cried again; then springing up, he rushed out of the tent.

Mary heard him communicate this good news to those on the outside; and, in a moment, she saw him return to his place at her feet, whilst he regarded her with an expression of the greatest joy. She felt a few warm drops fall upon her face; and, looking up, beheld the duchess tenderly watching her, while the tears flowed down her cheeks.

"Be quiet, dear child; your life and our happiness depends upon your calmness," said she, in a gentle voice; for she saw that Mary wished to speak.

Stanloff now begged the duchess to seek repose; for he feared the effect which the agitation caused by this event might have upon her.

"Do not speak to me of repose," said she, quietly; "she has risked her life to save mine. The least movement may bring on

that frightful bleeding : let her, therefore, remain in this position."

"Oh, my dear mother!" cried Richmond, hiding his face in the hand of the duchess.

Something crossed her mind at this moment; for, drawing her hand hastily away, she replied,

"We have all need of moderation and composure in our behaviour, I think; for the slightest agitation may be fatal to her."

"I will be composed," said Richmond, rising from his knees. "Tell me, Stanloff, whether I must leave you: I will do as you desire me."

"The greatest quiet is necessary," answered Stanloff, gently.

"Then, God be with you," said Richmond, bowing to Mary "and may the angels above watch over and preserve you!"

Mary looked at him. "Thou art my good angel," thought she. "'tis thou that healest me."

Master Allincroft's feast was almost forgotten by all: every one was occupied in thinking of the unfortunate Lady Mary; and they assembled near the tent to hear Stanloff's opinion as to her recovery, which, he said, depended upon whether the bleeding again returned. The duchess appeared the most agitated of all. She had seen, with indescribable anguish, the result of Mary's attempts to save her: her own danger appeared to be forgotten by her; and, when she left the carriage, she tore herself from the embraces of her other children, hastening to Richmond and the unhappy sufferer. She was overpowered by grief when she saw the state of Mary; and, fully sympathizing with Richmond, she repeatedly uttered her name with expressions of love and tenderness.

A litter had been hastily constructed, and Mary had been conveyed to the tent, where Master Allincroft, almost inconsolable, was awaiting her; for he regarded himself as partly the cause of this frightful accident. Stanloff now desired that his patient should not be removed until twenty-four hours had elapsed; and it was resolved to make the tent as comfortable as possible, so that she might pass the night there. The duchess, Olonia Dorset, and Richmond, determined to remain with Stanloff; while the duke,

accompanied by the rest of the party, were to return to the castle, and order everything that was necessary for the removal of the invalid on the following day.

Master Allincroft dismissed his remaining guests, and promised to keep watch by the tent during the night, in case any assistance should be required. Richmond remained at the entrance; whilst Olonia and the duchess took their places by the side of the sufferer.

Towards morning, Mary fell into a sweet sleep; and when she was awakened, soon after sunrise, by the singing of the birds in the adjoining wood, she asked Olonia, in a firm voice, whether she were really alive or in paradise.

She rapidly grew better, and in the evening was so well, that Stanloff gave orders for her return to the castle. As the litter in which she was conveyed entered the court, she found all the inhabitants assembled to welcome her; some shedding tears of grief at the accident that had befallen her, and others expressing the most lively sympathy; for she was truly beloved by all.

Mary answered their inquiries with a smile. Notwithstanding the recollection that she had so narrowly escaped death, nay, that even now she might not recover, a sweet peace pervaded her mind; and the tears that were shed appeared to her more befitting her situation the day previous, when she entered that court in full health, than now, when she had had the unspeakable happiness of saving the life of her benefactress. Nevertheless, she expressed her thanks for the sympathy and affection which all testified towards her, and endeavoured to evince her gratitude in looks as well as words.

The duchess ordered the litter to be carried to her own apartment, where Mary found everything prepared for her reception; and whither that lady, accompanied by Morton, followed her, as she had determined to take upon herself the care of the invalid; and Mary, full of gratitude, pressed the hand of the duchess to her lips.

Success rewarded her attention: Mary recovered rapidly, and was soon able to leave her room, although not yet permitted to join the company

The recent event caused a change in the minds of all at Godway Castle. The duchess, transported with gratitude, now evinced without reserve the affection which she had hitherto suppressed; and those around her, perceiving this, and touched by the devotion and self-sacrifice which Mary had displayed, endeavoured, to the utmost of their power, to make her happy, and bestowed upon her their unremitting attentions. Her own peace of mind seemed also to be restored. She felt contented with all around her, and attached to the place where she had met with so much kindness; whilst the anxiety which she evinced, when any change in her situation was mentioned as possible, consoled her friends with the hope that she would receive the news of Master Brixton's ill-success with less grief than she would have done under less happy circumstances.

All around her considered themselves as responsible for the restoration of her health, and therefore used every means which would tend to her perfect recovery.

The various guests who had been sojourning at the castle had now departed, and only the members of the family remained. These had assembled one lovely evening on the terrace, having just persuaded Stanloff to allow Lady Mary to join them, when the sound of horns was heard from the watch-tower, and intelligence was brought to the duke that a body of riders approached the castle.

Ramsey, whose business it was to welcome strangers, hastened to meet them; while Stanloff, now withdrawing his consent to his patient's appearing below stairs, went to visit her in her own apartments.

Ramsey speedily returned, and, with a glowing face and in great excitement, approached the duke, who was awaiting the visitors on the terrace.

"Well," said he, smiling, "you appear to have something very important to tell us. Who is it that honours us by this visit? I hope to receive pleasant news."

"The visitor, your grace, is following on foot: the announcement of his arrival reached us too late for me to receive him with

due honour. I am forbidden to mention his name; yet I beg that your grace will meet him in the castle court."

"In truth," answered the duke, good-humouredly, "you are very polite, and very considerate of the honours due to our guests. But we will follow you; for you are a good seneschal, and we can trust to your advice."

"Do so, gracious sir," said Ramsey, looking anxiously towards the hall.

It was soon evident that the good seneschal's impatience was not without cause; for many gentlemen, among whom was one whose dignified demeanour showed that he was accustomed to take precedence of all others, passed through the great hall, and appeared upon the terrace.

The duke hastened to meet them: the gentleman, however, whose face was entirely shaded by his large hat, hardly answered the greeting; but passing on to the ladies, stopped suddenly before the widowed duchess.

"Will you permit an old friend to claim your hospitality unannounced?" said he, while he threw back the cloak in which he was enveloped; and, taking off his hat, displayed to the astonished duchess the noble and handsome face of Charles I.

"My king!" exclaimed she, with emotion.

"The king!" repeated all around her.

Charles now turned, and, with his peculiar grace, greeted all present, showing particular respect to the mother of his deceased friend.

This unexpected and inexplicable event occasioned great surprise; for all thought that the king was awaiting the intelligence of the arrival of his young wife, who was daily expected; and it was some time before the duchess could recover herself sufficiently to express her joy. Charles appeared grave and thoughtful, and directed his conversation principally to his hostess and Lord Richmond. He put many questions to the former relating to her husband's journey to Spain; to his will; and also concerning her own life since his death. He examined Richmond with a penetrating eye, and directed his undivided attention to him whenever he spoke.

"Our first meeting, Lord Derby," said he, kindly, "was of a graver nature; but it redounded so much to your honour, that you could scarcely have wished it otherwise."

"The first important moment of my life took place under the eyes of your majesty," said Richmond, "and may it sanctify all others of the same kind?"

"So!" said the king, with an agitated voice, "have you continued to exercise the duty of chivalrous protection?"

Richmond, astonished at this question, looked up at the king, in whose eye there was an expression which he could not understand.

"I shall do so, my liege, if any opportunity occur," answered he; "but no man needs to seek one."

"Bravo!" cried the king; "I also think that the courage which leads men to rush into danger, frequently causes more harm than they can afterwards remedy."

Charles now became thoughtful, and soon rose to retire; announcing that he intended to start the following day; and asking permission to occupy the apartments of the late duke.

The gentlemen who remained after the king had retired confirmed the duchess's opinion, that this visit was caused by something more important than the simple wish of seeing the family of his deceased friend. They said that he had determined upon leaving London immediately, although the arrival of the Princess was hourly expected; that the arrangements had been made with the greatest speed and secrecy; and that the orders were given by the king himself, when he left the death-bed of his chamberlain, Master Porter.

The duchess, notwithstanding her habitual coldness, was more than usually agitated at the thought of an interview which Charles had requested for the next morning, and during which she concluded that she should learn the real cause of this remarkable visit.

Meanwhile the king, who evinced great emotion on entering the apartment of his friend, dismissed, as soon as was possible, the gentlemen of the house, and also his own suite.

The approach of death had raised another struggle in the mind of

Porter, and this time his sense of right conquered the sophistry of his jesuitical education. He perceived that though Lady Mary might have been discovered, and saved from the hands of her persecutors, yet that she could not be perfectly safe until the king should take her under his protection; and compassion for her led him to reveal all to his master.

Whatever might have been the anger excited in the king's mind while he first listened to this confession, the thought that she was still alive overcame every other consideration; and, regarding Porter as his greatest benefactor, he seemed to consider that he had fully atoned by this last service for the sin of a life spent in treachery and falsehood. The old man further recommended the king to trust no one, but to go immediately himself to Godway Castle, where he would find her; for Porter had but too good reason to believe that the holy fathers had already filled that place, which was become vacant by his illness, with one of their spies.

The king, regardless of all other events, set out directly for the castle of his old friend, in the hope of finding her in whom all his happiness was centered. His disappointment at not seeing her with the ladies on the terrace was great; and his dread of hearing that she was not there rendered him incapable of making any close inquiries. Meanwhile, he determined to obtain the document which was of so much importance to her; and, for that purpose, begged permission to occupy the bedchamber of the late duke. He discovered the little spring which we have mentioned; the panel opened, and the lovely picture stood before him.

We will not examine too closely the frame of mind in which this man, destined from his birth to misfortune, regarded the image of her whom he had so tenderly loved. The history of his heart is not known to the world: with that of his life we are better acquainted; and we therein discover the two faults most fatal to a sovereign—obstinacy and weakness. His subjects knew not how to exercise forbearance towards him: they were ripe for revolt, and, seizing the reins of government from his hands, they became their own rulers, until compelled at last to kiss the iron rod of a Cromwell.

We cannot refrain from compassion towards Charles, who, gazing on the idol of his youth, looked sorrowfully forward to the future : although not imagining that the events of that future would ultimately be destructive to him. His thoughts reverted to the past ; and he remembered how he had ordered this picture to be secretly placed in his friend's room ; how the duke had conquered his love for this creature ; and how he had learned to regard her only as an incentive to his efforts after all that was good and noble. Charles recollected, that, on the eventful night when the death of his brother placed him higher in the world, but separated him from his secret bride, he could trust no other than Robert, who also loved her, to carry to her the assurances of his truth and affection. He knew that from that moment his friend's trials began ; he knew how proudly he had struggled, and how he had at last conquered, and offered his hand to her who had loved him so long and so hopelessly—Arabella Bristol. He remembered how his friend had endeavoured to persuade him not to take this step, to which he seemed instigated by despair ; he thought of all the services which this faithful friend had rendered to him, and how carefully he had guarded the secret confided to him ;—he recollected all these things, and a pang of grief shot through his heart : the sense of loneliness pressed upon him ; and he was only saved from overpowering sorrow by the hope that his child might be still spared to him.

He quickly approached the picture, and putting his hand behind it, drew forth a small casket, in which his friend had placed the papers necessary to prove the legitimacy of that child ; and he betook himself, with a heavy heart, to their perusal.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The king honoured the family with his company at breakfast the next morning, and was received by all with respectful joy. He conversed almost exclusively with Richmond ; and, after saying that

he had heard of his journey to the eastern coast of England, asked him what had led him to visit so uninteresting a part of the kingdom.

"It was not a journey of pleasure, sire," answered Richmond: "I undertook it in order to fulfil a duty which made me indifferent to the country around me."

"A private affair?" asked Charles. "But," added he, seeing the young man's confusion, "I have no wish to pry into family secrets. I will not embarrass you; but will merely express a hope that the best success attended this journey."

"Whatever I may have desired will surely be realized, now that your majesty has graciously given me your good wishes," said Richmond.

All were astonished to see the king rise hastily from his seat, and approach Richmond, while he exclaimed,

"Oh, tell me! tell me! were you successful? My gratitude to you will be unbounded."

There was no time to ask an explanation of these words, for the events of the next few minutes heightened the surprise of all present.

Lady Mary, particularly desirous of seeing her king, had begged Stanloff to take her to the terrace, upon which the room opened where the family were breakfasting. She had resolved not to join her friends during his stay, for she thought an introduction to him would cause confusion, since so much doubt and mystery hung over her name. Gaston, her constant companion, was with her; and when they came near the door of the saloon, he suddenly pricked up his ears, and, notwithstanding Mary's attempts to restrain him, darted into the room. He had scarcely entered, when the king, as we have mentioned, sprang from his seat. At the same moment Gaston, recognising him as the friend and companion of his master, threw himself upon him, almost wild with joy.

The momentary surprise of the king was soon over, and, after caressing him, he hastened towards the open door, which Lady Mary had just now passed.

"See," said Stanloff to her, "now you can see your king: he is standing with Gaston by the door."

Mary turned round, and immediately gave utterance to a cry of joy, exclaiming,

"Oh God! my uncle!" and she threw herself at his feet.

The astonishment of the spectators was indescribable: they all rose from the table, and hastened towards the king.

"For God's sake, Lady Mary, what are you doing?" exclaimed the duchess, deeply agitated by the appearance of an object which her proud heart had wished to keep hidden from the king.

But the scene changed; for Charles, lifting the maiden from the ground, clasped her in his arms, while he pronounced her name in accents of the tenderest affection. Lady Mary laid her head upon his breast, and said, tenderly, but gravely,

"Now I have found again a home upon earth. You will solve all the mystery which hangs over me: now I shall know the name which I ought to bear."

"Oh! thou dear, unhappy, persecuted child," said the king, in accents of grief. "My whole power will not be sufficient to repay thee for what thou hast suffered—to give thee back what thou hast lost. But thou shalt have a name of which thou may'st be proud—thou shalt have a home worthy of the name which thou bearest.

"Madam," continued he, turning to the duchess, "know now, that you have made your king your everlasting debtor, through the kindness which you have shown to this child. In this moment I declare her to be the sweetest happiness of my life. She is my daughter; and her mother was Elizabeth Buckingham, whom God called from this world before I was able to make known her holy rights."

"You, the king? Elizabeth, my mother?" cried Mary; and the surprise appeared to have deprived her of all strength. The king led her to a couch, and affectionately supported her, while the rest of the party gave utterance to their surprise at this discovery.

We can understand the maternal feelings which led the duchess, with whose long, painful struggles we are acquainted, to hasten to

her beloved Richmond, and press him with a happy smile to her heart.

The elder duchess looked upon the scene with mute but intense joy; for the moment in which the king had proclaimed the Lady Mary his daughter, had restored to her the image of her son in its virtue and purity.

But both surprise and joy were soon interrupted; for Ramsey appeared, and kneeling solemnly before Charles, who was still supporting his daughter, addressed him in the following manner:—

“A royal messenger has just arrived at this castle, commissioned respectfully to inform your majesty, that the long-desired treasure is come, and that the soil of England has at length been trodden by the royal Henrietta of France, our present queen.”

The unhappy Charles started; and then, pressing Mary to his heart, tore himself away from her, saying,

“I thank you, sir, for the joyful news which you have brought me. You will oblige me by telling me what your wishes are. The person who brings me such intelligence ought to have no wish unfulfilled, if it be within our power to grant it. The moments of my stay are numbered,” added he, turning to the duchess. “Grant me a short interview, my lady; I am debtor to you, and also to this dear child;” and he begged Mary to accompany them to another room.

What passed in this interview must remain untold; but we may imagine much of what occurred from the circumstances with which we have become acquainted during our narrative. The king requested the duchess to allow his child to remain at Godway Castle, until he had informed the Princess Henrietta of the affair, and till he could bestow upon her that rank to which her birth entitled her.

When they returned to the saloon, Charles approached Lord Richmond, and thus addressed him:

“What you, my lord, have done for my daughter has deeply touched my heart. I know of no request that you could make which I should think too high to grant, in return for the services which you have rendered her. Till we meet again,” added he,

smiling, "you may continue the performance of those chivalrous duties which you so well understand, towards my daughter. To you, my friends, I commit my child, Lady Mary Stuart; and I hope to receive you all as guests at the approaching festival in London."

Charles departed, after having bid farewell to all; and his noble form was soon seen in the centre of the train, surrounded by the gentlemen of the castle.

CHAPTER, XXXIX.

The herald had announced the first levée of the queen of England, and all the inhabitants of the kingdom appeared to have arrived in London. The people stood in dense masses to witness the spectacle; while among them moved a procession of the nobles of England, Scotland, and Ireland, adorned with all the brilliancy to which their rank and station entitled them.

The joyfulness of the youths, whose minds were filled with a thousand bright hopes, bore a striking contrast to the quiet demeanour of the elder part of the train; who, knowing how such hopes are often doomed to disappointment, looked beyond this important event, and found in the future many indications which justified the gravity with which they approached the royal pair.

The saloons of Whitehall were already filled with those persons of distinction who possessed the privilege of appearing there. Henrietta of France had an agreeable word or a flattering remark ready for all whose names were renowned in the history of that country which was now to be her home. She appeared the ideal of grace and beauty, and her bright eye seemed to promise a happy reign. The old, grave, English barons could not resist the youthful and beautiful queen; their intention of mistrusting her, which they had considered prudent, was forgotten by nearly all, and an involun-

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tary confession of hope escaped them, as they saw her noble and intellectual forehead; while the young men swore by the hilt of their swords to dedicate their lives to her—more because she was a beautiful woman than because she was their queen.

Charles observed with pleasure the impression which his lovely wife produced. His features, which were naturally stamped with melancholy, were now illumined by a smile of satisfaction, and his whole demeanour betokened a cheerfulness which promised a happy life to the young queen. Yet something seemed occasionally to disquiet the royal pair; for they looked from time to time towards the doors, through which all the high and mighty of the land thronged to offer their homage.

The assembly, whose whole attention was fixed upon the king and queen, soon perceived that they impatiently expected some particular arrival, and they listened attentively to every name which the herald announced. At length a murmur of applause arose in the anteroom; and presently the Duke of Buckingham appeared, leading a lovely maiden, whose surpassing beauty and gorgeous attire attracted the attention of all present.

The murmur of admiration which met her ear as she passed along had given her manner a slight tinge of bashfulness, and caused a deep blush to appear in her cheeks. A ducal coronet, of the most costly gems, rested upon her dark tresses; her purple velvet train was trimmed with the royal ermine, and borne by two pages of the king's household; while from under it, hung, in rich folds, a dress of silver brocade, which was ornamented with the richest jewels.

She must be one of the royal house—but who was she? She had never been seen before; and how happened it that she was conducted by the Duke of Buckingham, who, to judge by his proud smile, seemed to regard the admiration she excited as a triumph belonging to himself.

They were followed by the young Duke of Nottingham, with his wife, his brother, Lord Richmond Derbery, and his uncle, Archibald Lord Glandford. The assembly were now silent with expectation, as the little train stopped at the entrance of the audience-

chamber, while the herald proclaimed their names. The beautiful creature seemed to hesitate a moment, and deep emotion appeared in her countenance; she then raised her dark eyes, and looked at the king, who had taken the hand of his wife, and was directing her attention to the stranger.

The most lovely smile illumined the features of the unknown: she withdrew her hand from that of Buckingham, and, forgetting her timidity, stepped proudly as a queen over the threshold.

"Mary Stuart, niece of the Duke of Buckingham!" cried the herald; and the astonished spectators beheld the royal pair leave the throne, and hasten towards the lady. They embraced her, and then led her between them to the throne, on the second step of which, and on the left of the queen, a seat was placed, of which she took possession. The Duke of Buckingham stood behind her; and the herald now proclaimed the family of Nottingham, with the addition of "Richmond, Duke of Glandford!"

As the young duke approached the throne, the king presented his hand to kiss; and Lord Dorset offered him a chair, which stood one step lower than that of the Duchess of Buckingham.

The assembly soon discovered that these two were betrothed, and that their marriage would take place in the king's chapel immediately after the levée. But this intelligence left room for many conjectures, for the announcement of her name had not satisfied the general curiosity. Why did she receive the rank of a princess of the blood royal? Where had she been until now? What position would be assigned to her in the future?

It is not to be expected that these questions would be correctly answered: the affair occupied the thoughts of the curious for some time; but as the parties concerned soon disappeared from public view, all by degrees was forgotten.

The young Duchess of Glandford accompanied her husband to Godway Castle, and remained there until the estate in the vicinity of her mother's castle, and which the king had presented to the noble pair, was ready for their reception.

They resided the greater part of the year at Buckingham Park, a place rich in happy recollections, near to Godway Castle, and

where Charles often visited them. They seldom appeared at court; but passed their lives in the society of their numerous friends, shedding happiness on all around them.

A year subsequent to these events, Mary accompanied her friends, Olonia Dorset and Lord Ormond, to the altar; and our heroine had now no wish unfulfilled.

The body of the elder duchess rested before long in the chapel of Godway Castle: her death, like her life, was perfect peace. This also was the portion of her daughter-in-law: the thorn which had marred the happiness of her previous life had been removed by the discovery of Mary's birth, and she felt with deep shame and repentance how cruelly she had mistaken him whom she so devotedly loved. This deep repentance of an injustice, of which her mother-in-law, the only person she had confided in, never reminded her, imparted a gentleness to her feelings which shed a mild light over the evening of her days.

Brixton acceded to the request of his pupil, and took up his abode at Buckingham Park, where he passed the remainder of his life in diffusing happiness wherever he appeared.

Lanci was appointed ranger of the duke's woods, and received the hand of his beloved Margaret.

Some years after her marriage, when Mary was attending upon the queen, the latter placed a letter in her hand. It was from France. Father Clement sent her his blessing and Electa's last farewell. She died soon after her reception in the Ursuline convent of Saint Clara, of which Father Clement was the confessor. Mary felt for her that sorrowful love with which we think of those for whom this world was too cold and harsh, and who sink like a tender plant beneath the night-frost; but who, we hope, are transplanted to a milder and more congenial soil.

The Duke of Buckingham paid no more attention to the niece of whom he had expected so much; and who, he considered, had committed a folly by her common-place marriage, which had destroyed all the influence he had hoped her noble birth would have procured her.

Lord Bristol belongs to history: for his life and his death are epochs in the annals of England;—and we will now take leave of a family whose present happiness is secured, without deeming it necessary to inquire what part they played in the great tragedy of their native land.

THE END OF GODWAY CASTLE.

